Greg Critser on the Latest in Food Snobbery

The Washington Monthly

July/August 2001
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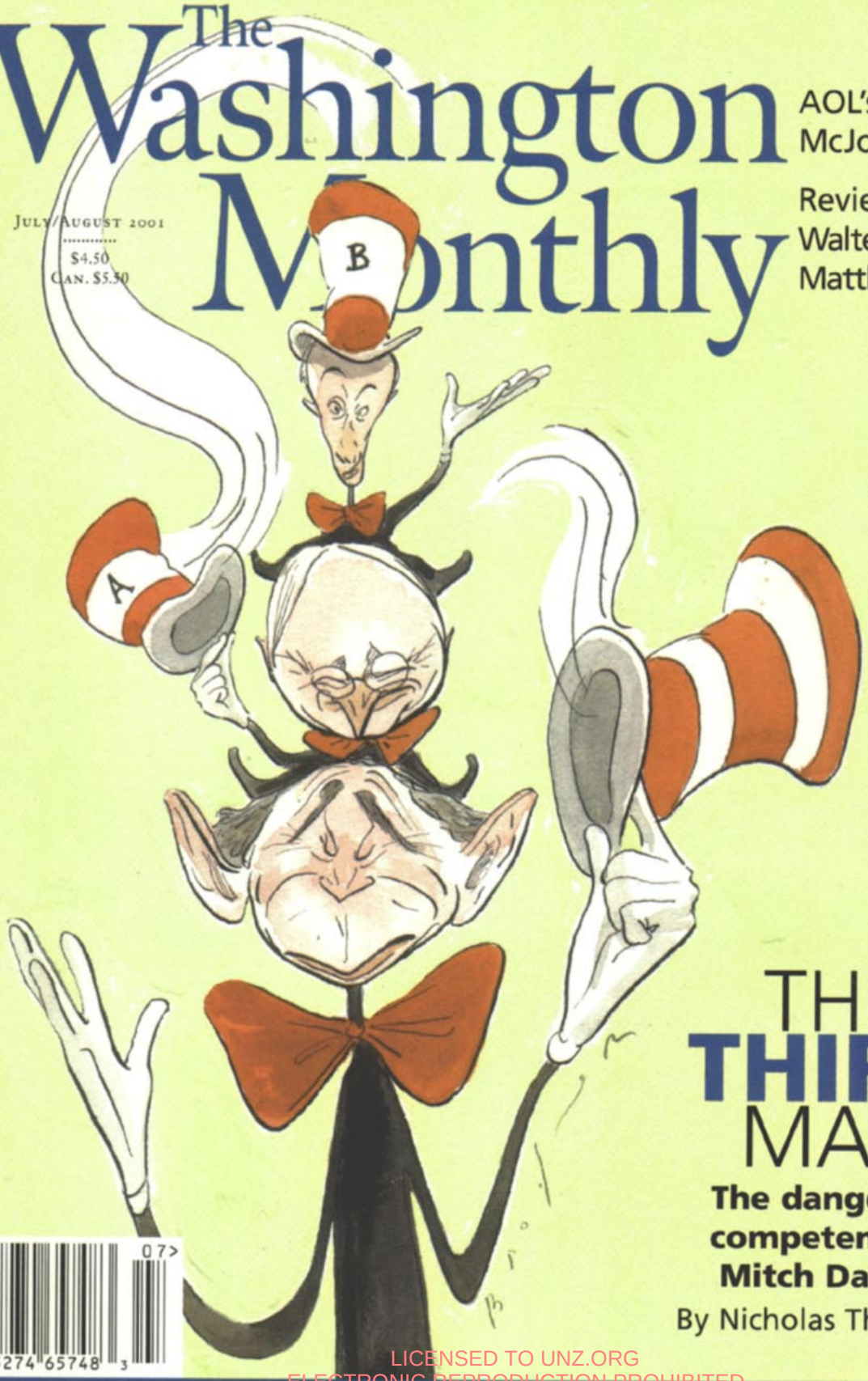

THE THIRD MAN

The dangerous competence of Mitch Daniels

By Nicholas Thompson

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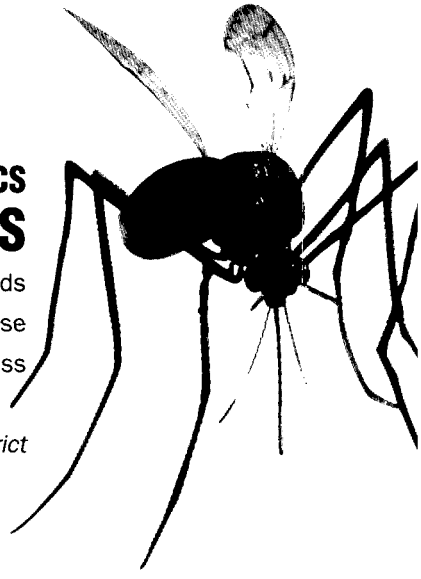
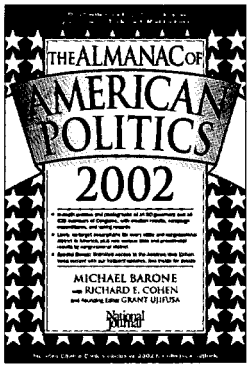
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT AMERICAN POLITICS
INCLUDING BLOOD-SUCKING WHINERS

"Behind the Shore are swamp and flatland, the Pine Barrens and vegetable fields that give New Jersey the name 'Garden State.' Growth has been slow in these small towns and gas station intersections, communities in whose eerie calmness in the summer you can hear mosquitoes whining."

—*The Almanac of American Politics on New Jersey's 2nd Congressional District*





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Letters

Party Poopers

Nicholas Thompson huffs and puffs, but he can't make much out of Republican moderates ("Extremism in the Defense of Moderation," May 2001). No matter how you slice it, Jim Jeffords, Sweet Suzy, the Big O, and Lincoln Chaffee do not remind anybody of Teddy Roosevelt. Republican moderates have been followers rather than leaders, and that's been the case at least since the heyday of Everett Dirksen, Gerald Ford, and Bob Michel. Instead of proposing and fighting for a centrist vision, they try to adjust liberal and conservative ideas at the margins. "A little bit more of this." "A little less of that." "Can't we do this a little differently?" "Can't a little bit more of this pork go to MY constituents?" That's the message of Republican moderation whether they are responding to Democratic liberals or Republican conservatives. It isn't much of a message. Moderates don't pursue it with much passion. Oddly enough, the electorate is probably more comfortable with the apolitical, anti-ideological shaving of the moderates than with the ferocity of someone like Tom DeLay or Maxine Waters. However, as Teddy Roosevelt might have said, timidity doesn't get the job done in politics any more than it does in real life.

RIC N. CARIC
Morehead, Ky.

Life of the Party

Congratulations on a great article ("Extremism in the Defense of Moderation," May 2001). A solid analysis of recent (and not-so-recent) American political history, it said what I have been groping to articulate ever since the Reagan years about the very definitions of "liberal" and "conservative." A lifelong conservative Republican, a former member of Young Americans for Freedom, a GOP precinct captain, manager of a number of local GOP campaigns, and volunteer *ad nauseum*, I was astonished to find that the "wing-nuts" had taken over my party, "pulled my stencil" and were vilifying me and those like me with venom spewed by the likes of Ann Coulter.

Your piece put it all back into a perspective I can live with, and reinforced my instinct that it was not my beliefs that had changed, but rather that the terms had been redefined out from under me.

MIMI MADDEN
Washington, D.C.

Wrong Hide

Your summary of weapons of mass destruction civil support team (CST) response times is reasonably accurate and, in fact, you identify the fundamental problems associated with their existence. ("Weapons of Mass Confusion," May 2001.) You have, however, completely misidentified the cause and instigator of their creation: the Office of the Secretary of Defense, with able assistance from Congress.

To be clear, the National Guard wanted absolutely nothing to do with this mission. The $10 million study was directed by Congress, initiated at least in part by the defense contractor SAIC, but to the great dismay of the National Guard Bureau (NGB).

If you read the NGB National Study, you'll find it to be much less than a proactive document for enhanced National Guard roles; rather it is a watered-down compromise designed to soothe the other 26 federal agencies. Twenty-one drafts of the "final" document were required before the Guard would forward it to Congress.

While the National Guard is certainly deserving of criticism on many fronts, it played fall guy on this one; ironically, had it been more proactive in the roles and development of these teams, it had the in-house expertise to do a much better job.

So, while I agree with much of what you and Dr. Smithson say, you've nailed a target to the wrong hide when you lay the blame on the National Guard. They not only did *not* want this mission, they ran screaming into the night to avoid it and, by doing so, laid themselves wide open to criticisms of this type. In fact, you should criticize them for not being more aggressive in this arena and toward accepting more appropriate roles better suited to their capabilities. My opinions are based in active participation and observation of the activities you've covered in your article.

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST
via email

Pork Rinds

The situation portrayed by Joshua Green ("Weapons of Mass Confusion," May 2001) is an extremely common one in Washington and produces two conclusions:

1. Pork trumps emergency preparedness;
2. In Washington, there is no risk of any management.

The Washington Monthly could print stories like this one for the next 10 years and not exhaust the possibilities.

JACK HALEY
Warner Robins, Ga.

The editors reply: We will.

Bill Padding

With regard to your article "Flatlining" in the May issue, I find that the analysis of the HMO problem does not break out the functions of the HMO. I look at mine as actuarial risk of serious illness, maintenance, and negotiated fees with hospitals. The article concentrated on the first two. I have found that hospitals will attempt to charge the walk-in cash customer the highest rate. When I walked in and asked for an estimate on the bill for a series of immunizations, I was given an estimate of $1,500, but the bill later came in for $5,000. I paid $1,500, quoting the estimate and never heard from them again. It turns out that this is what the HMO would have paid. The difference here was all the markup on the drugs. The bill represented a sixfold markup while the estimate and what the HMO would have paid was less than double. The drugs were not all that rare.

I saw this again later when I paid $150 for a test where the HMO paid a

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negotiated $130 and the theoretical standard price was $450. This was a smaller clinic so the cash price was about the same as the negotiated price.

I question the ethics of padding the bills of the cash customer to attempt to claw back what they have given away to the prepaid plans. Hospitals can be as unethical in padding the bills up as the HMOs are at grinding them down. I do get tired of bargaining with providers and let the HMO do it for me.

OWEN GALLAGHER
Hudson, Mass.

Get A Job

I agree with many of the expressed views in *The Washington Monthly* on higher education. However, the article, "Doc'd," by Paul DeMoulin (May 2001), just doesn't ring true. There are many problems in doctoral education, but generally speaking, the unemployability of new Ph.D.s is not among them.

During the period Dr. DeMoulin cites in the article (late 1980s), I was the department chair of computer science at the University of New Orleans. I spent a good deal of my time recruiting faculty, as we had numerous vacancies to fill. Our situation was such that we would have given strong consideration to hiring someone in a related discipline—electrical engineering, for example. And a dissertation topic such as "The Physics and Modeling of Gallium Arsenide Cells" would have been a reasonable research area for hiring someone into our department. In the hiring pool I would get after national advertising, there would typically be between 100 and 150 candidates for positions. That may sound daunting, but when you took a second look at the pool and found that it consisted at the 95 percent level of non-citizens or non-residents, it meant that there might only have been five or 10 candidates that I could legally hire. And I know from my experience in the discipline that virtually every computer-science program faced the same numbers game—and that our electrical-engineering colleagues were in almost the same boat.

The dangers of tightly linked relationships with corporations, of total reliance on research productivity (as measured by external grants) for promotion at many universities, and of college athletics dominating the university agenda are all real problems that we must address. Unfortunately, Dr. DeMoulin's remedies are pretty silly: "Exit the research business, disassociate the labs from the school, terminate doctorate degrees, and focus on classroom instruction." I for one believe that my own teaching—at the undergraduate level as well as the graduate level—has benefited from the fact that I have tried to continue to be active in research. Had I not been able to bring the results of an active research program into the classroom, my students would be learning material from the 1970s, and in my research field, this would be almost akin to saying I would be teaching techniques from the 1870s or 1770s.

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Nickel and Dimed

Nickel and Dimed is the title of a new book which we feel Washingtonians, in particular, should take time to read. It is a reminder of the very substantial underclass in our city, many from Central America, who toil long hours at menial jobs to make our lives so very comfortable. They work in our kitchens, clean our offices and bathrooms, wash our cars, mow our lawns, take care of many of our needs. They do it quietly, often unseen, without complaint, and without much reward.

Washington exudes wealth. While the earnings of the city's professional classes, including government workers, reach astronomical new levels, the underclass are lucky if they get a minimum wage, luckier still if they can work two jobs to make ends meet. While we typically complain about the level of our health benefits, they usually receive none. They are afraid to complain, for fear of losing a job they need more.

Nickel and Dimed, by Barbara Ehrenreich, is not specifically about Washington, yet it probably applies to Washington more than any other city. You will recognize the people she writes about. They are the working poor. And they are all around us. In more ways than we probably care to admit, they make Washington work.

If you don't buy the book (a steal at $23), at least read Katherine Newman's review in the June 10 *Washington Post Book World*.

"Amid all the talk of economic prosperity and declining welfare rolls," writes Newman, "it is easy to forget that most poor people work at jobs the rest of us would never consider. They bend over toilet bowls, endure the heat and grease of low-budget restaurant kitchens and the monotony of repetitive jobs that leave behind a trail of miseries—bad knees, aching backs, damaged skin."

This kind of toil is often invisible, she notes, because it takes place behind the scenes in middle-class homes, health clubs, office buildings and eateries. "And the low-wage workers who put bread on their own tables by cleaning up after the better-off are rendered invisible by race, language and poverty."

The book's author examined this invisible world by working in these kinds of jobs in various parts of the country for nearly a year. She gives us an insider's look at the dark side of our "new economy." Or as Professor Newman puts it, she "opens a window into the daily lives of the invisible workforce that fuels the service economy [and] forces the reader to realize that all the good-news talk about welfare reform masks a harsher reality."

The book's full title is *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in Boom-time America*. Try it.

John Adams Associates Inc.
public affairs consultants
Washington DC

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Tilting at Windmills

BY CHARLES PETERS

Royal Credentialism • Rebates for the Rich • Blockbuster Legal Fees
Dangerous Police Games • Jackie's Cynicism

FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE—I suspect mostly the latter—the expense account rip-off has become an American tradition. It is so embedded in our culture that few people seem embarrassed about participating in it. *Southwest Airlines* magazine recently revealed how an airline had once used an expense-account ripoff to its own profit. In 1973, Southwest's then-bigger competitor, Braniff, cut the fare for the Dallas-to-Houston trip to $13. Southwest countered with an offer of the same fare or a bottle of liquor for those who paid the full fare. Business travellers quickly saw the wisdom of taking the booze and letting their companies pay the full fare. The promotion was so successful that for the two months it was in effect, Southwest became the state's largest distributor of Chivas scotch, Crown Royal whiskey, and Smirnoff vodka.

••••••••

WHY DOES PAUL O'NEILL WANT to protect tax cheats? He opposes a crackdown on tax havens like those in the Caribbean supported by—get this—seven former IRS commissioners from the Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Clinton administrations.

••••••••

"BLOCKBUSTER SETTLES SUIT ON Late Fees" was the headline in the business section of *The New York Times*. Blockbuster was acknowledging that it should not have charged late fees that cost much more than the movies' original rental price. I thought, "That's nice, a little triumph for the consumer." But when I read the rest of the story, I realized that the consumers aren't the real winners. The only cash beneficiaries are the lawyers. They'll get up to $9.25 million in fees.

••••••••

IN HIS REVIEW IN *THE NEW YORK TIMES* of Bruce J. Schulman's *The Seventies*, George Packer dismisses as "a kind of *reductio ad absurdum*" Schulman's assertion that Jackie Kennedy's decision to marry Aristotle Onassis "signaled the end of the optimistic, liberal 1960s." At first I nodded my head in agreement with Packer, but the more I thought about it and let my mind go back to the time of the marriage—October 1968—the more I thought Schulman, even if guilty of overstatement, could still be on to something. One thing I'm practically certain of is that the marriage cost Hubert Humphrey the election and put Richard Nixon in the White House. Although the country was ultimately more forgiving of Jackie's second marriage, at the time it seemed a shockingly cynical betrayal of the idealism of Camelot. If the leading lady was cynical enough to marry a rich old man who was infamous for his highly devious, if not downright crooked, business practices, what did that say about Camelot?

For two months, Southwest Airlines became Texas' largest distributor of Chivas scotch, Crown Royal whiskey, and Smirnoff vodka.

It took the wind out of the sails of a good number of those who had been devoted followers of Robert and John Kennedy. If it hadn't happened, I'm convinced that the emotion aroused by the assassination of Robert Kennedy would have helped Humphrey in the same way that similar feelings about John Kennedy's murder helped Lyndon Johnson in 1964.

Of course, poor Hubert's candidacy was unfairly sabotaged in other ways. Gene McCarthy was too late and too tepid in supporting Humphrey that fall. And the infamous alliance between Anna Chennault and Richard Nixon resulted in the South Vietnamese torpedoing the Paris peace talks on the eve of the election, which, as a blow to optimism and hope, had an effect not unlike the Onassis wedding. And you have to remember that after the Kennedy and King assassinations that same year, optimism and hope were definitely not in excess supply.

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ON THE WHOLE, THE COUNTRY has become more meritocratic, but money still makes a difference. For example, at Duke University, just 15 percent of the students come from families earning less than $50,000 a year, even though such families make up half of the nation, according to Jonathan Kaufman of *The Wall Street Journal*. Nationally, he points out, college students "spend more than $600 a month on non-academic discretionary items such as eating out, movies, clothes, and CDs." How many families can come up with that much, which amounts to

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$5,400 in a nine-month academic year, in addition to tuition, room, board, and books? In higher education today, it's not a matter of keeping up with the Joneses, it's keeping up with the kids with credit cards.

••••••••

BUREAUCRATS TEND TO RESIST or evade assessments of their performance. Sometimes, of course, they are simply afraid of the truth. If their program isn't accomplishing much, maybe it can be dispensed with. Certainly their hopes of getting larger budgets, which allow for promotions and bigger salaries, would be diminished. Sometimes they find ways of cooking the books to give the impression that things are better than they are. Thus, the D.C. Department of Public Works claimed that it had moved more than 8,000 abandoned vehicles last year. The actual total was 4,225. What accounts for the difference? The department counted not only cars towed from the streets, but also cars transferred from one impoundment lot to another, a process it controlled and could carry out as often as needed to make its numbers look good.

The Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District avoids bad news about the disease-causing organisms in its effluent by testing between 3 and 4 a.m., when most people are asleep and not flushing their toilets. Lucent Technologies recently demonstrated that this kind of chicanery is not confined to the public sector. Under tremendous pressure from their boss, Richard McGinn, Lucent's sales staff managed to come within $100 million of the CEO's revenue goal of $6 billion for the fourth quarter of 2000. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, they not only offered discounts and "other incentives certain to eat into future sales," but also "booked sales for goods that were shipped merely to distribution channels." The truth is that Lucent was not just $100 million but $1.2 billion short.

In 1993, the Clinton administration tried to do something about this problem with the Government Performance and Results Act, which required federal agencies to measure their performance against specific annual performance goals. But more than 40 percent of government managers do not appear to use performance information, according to a recent study by the General Accounting Office. This means that large parts of the government are not being managed for results. It is hard to see how performance can be improved if the managers aren't trying to find out what works and what doesn't.

••••••••

INCIDENTALLY, *THE MILWAUKEE Journal-Sentinel*, to which I'm indebted for the "testing while they're not flushing" story, reports that the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage district has a PR budget of more than $1 million. This is the tip of a bureaucratic iceberg. Immense amounts of public funds are spent on PR. The last time we looked, the Pentagon had 1,592 employees working full-time on public relations. Of course, Linda Tripp's departure did subtract one, but her $90,000-plus salary suggests just how much of our money is spent on these employees.

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MORTON KONDRACKE RECENTLY wrote a moving piece about his wife's struggle with Parkinson's disease. In it, he lamented the underfunding of research for a cure, noting how little Parkinson's research gets compared to HIV/AIDS. A beloved member of the *Monthly* family is a victim of Parkinson's, so we understand how friends and relatives of people devastated by one disease resent money devoted to chicer ailments and how this begets a ghoulish competition to see whose loved ones are going to be saved and whose will be allowed to die. One can't help thinking that if we could escape the tax-cutters and devote our surpluses to meeting real needs instead of further fattening the wallets of the wealthy, it would be more likely that we would be able to fund all our legitimate research needs—or at least come a lot closer to that goal than we are today.

••••••••

MY WIFE RECENTLY PAID THE full amount of a bill from a credit-card company. The reaction from the company was to respond: "We want to make sure we aren't losing your business. Were you simply making a payment, or was there another reason for your decision—such as an offer from another credit-card company?"

Are Americans so credit-card happy that a customer who pays in full is a source of consternation? Or is it that the credit-card companies so enjoy collecting interest on the balance due that they don't want you to pay it off each month?

••••••••

FOR AFFICIONADOS OF THE culture of the subcontinent, and for all who are amused by the silliness of credentialism, I offer, courtesy of *Slate*'s Tim Noah, this statement of King Dipendra's qualifications from *Rising Nepal*, a state-owned daily, after he shot his family members and himself, and lay in a coma as king for a day:

"His Majesty the King received his primary school education from Kanti Ishwori Shishu Vidhyalya, Kathmandu. Having passed the Class 3 district-level examinations in the first division, His Majesty the King joined Budhanilkantha High School and passed the School Leaving Certificate Examinations in the First division. Then, His Majesty the King completed 'O' and 'A' levels from Eton College of the United Kingdom.

"After returning from the United Kingdom, His Majesty the King studied BA at Tri-Chandra College and passed in the first division. His Majesty the King joined the Tribhuvan University and studied Geography at the Masters' Level and also passed in the first

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division with distinction. . . ."

This guy has to be the best qualified mass murderer in history.

••••••••

SEVENTY-FOUR OF RONALD Reagan's appointees were confirmed in the first hundred days of his administration. For George W. Bush, the figure was 32. At first this seems shocking, but you also need to know that in the same period Reagan had nominated 138 candidates while Bush nominated only 79. Still the confirmation process is too slow, with multiple and lengthy forms to be filled out, asking questions like what countries you have traveled to in the last 15 years, with FBI agents following up with queries about whether you and your relatives ever associated with members of the Communist Party. The extensive FBI investigation given every nominee may make sense for those in highly sensitive national security positions, but for most nominees, most of the inquiries seem irrelevant to what they will be doing in the Department of Labor or the Department of Agriculture. And I must say that my many doubts and suspicions about Bush's nominees do not include the fear that they are closet Marxist-Leninists.

••••••••

IF YOU'VE EVER BEEN ARRESTED —I was once, for demonstrating against apartheid outside the South African Embassy—you know how hard it is to balance yourself with your hands cuffed behind your back. It's hard to climb the steep steps into the paddy wagon and, once inside with the vehicle moving, hard to keep from falling to your side or off your seat at sudden stops or turns. Now we learn from *The Philadelphia Inquirer*'s Nancy Phillips and Rose Ciotta that the Philadelphia police have developed a game involving fast driving with sudden stops and turns, deliberately designed to give prisoners a hard time. The assumption behind this game is that every arrestee is guilty and deserves a rough ride. Not only is the assumption dubious but the game has inflicted punishment that is cruel. Twenty people have been injured; two suffered permanent paralysis.

From my teens when my hometown police chief proudly showed me bloody clothing that he described as "coming from niggers" that he and his subordinates had beaten, I knew cops could be sadistic. Over the years, the evidence has mounted, most recently in an article in this magazine and in a series in *The Washington Post* about the abuses of the Prince George's County, Maryland police. Decent cops do exist but we need far more of them. Police departments need to get rid of the bad guys and replace them with good guys. That will take courage—and money. Here, as in education, we see that the problem is that the Democrats just don't have the courage to take on the public employee unions, and the Republicans don't have the generosity and public spirit to pay the salaries that are needed.

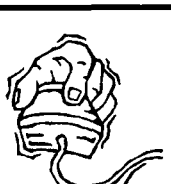
We need more media owners who are willing to forgo profit for the sake of quality, owners who are prouder of the good they are doing than of the money they are making.

••••••••

SEN. PAUL WELLSTONE TRIED TO amend Bush's education bill to require that the reading and math tests not be implemented until Congress increases Title I funding for low-income school districts from the current $8.6 billion to $24.7 billion. Under the Bush budget, the funding will only go up $1.6 billion for the coming fiscal year. Wellstone's amendment was defeated with a number of liberals like Edward Kennedy joining the GOP in knocking it down. They may have been justified on grounds of political realism, but Wellstone was making an important point. It's not fair to test schools that aren't receiving their fair share of financing. How can they be expected to compete with rich schools? Yet the story of this amendment was barely reported. I found it only in *The Washington Times*, which seemed primarily interested in pointing out that the Democrats were split on the issue.

••••••••

IT NOW APPEARS THAT THE White House is prepared to reverse its stupid halt of negotiations with North Korea. The credit seems to belong to Donald Gregg, Bush Sr.'s ambassador to South Korea, who wrote a persuasive memo on the subject that



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father passed on to son. You may recall how ineptly the administration handled this matter in its early days. First, Secretary of State Colin Powell announced that the Bush administration was going "to pick up where President Clinton and his administration left off" in talking to the North Koreans. Then, the next day, W. told South Korean President Kim Dae Jong, who was visiting the White House and who was eager for the negotiations to resume, that that wasn't going to happen any time soon, cleverly managing to repudiate a top subordinate and a respected ally at the same time.

Are Americans so credit-card happy that a customer who pays in full is a source of consternation?

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AFTER I RETIRED IN early May, I went on vacation. When I returned, I found in the mail the June issue of this magazine, the first edited by my successor, Paul Glastris. I liked all the articles, most of them a lot. Indeed, I had only one complaint. I didn't like the total negativity of the cover headline: "Not Even Superman Can Save Urban Schools." Matthew Miller's cover article acknowledged that the situation in some urban school systems was getting better. When I confided this one concern to a staff member, he laughed and said, "That's just what Paul thought. He tried to change the headline, but it was too late." I was delighted. Any doubt that I hadn't turned the magazine over to a soulmate was eliminated.

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YOU MAY RECALL THAT I URGED that any tax rebate be based on what people had paid in the form of payroll tax. If you wonder why, consider this: "Almost half of those Americans in the bottom 60 percent of income earners—more than 32 million individuals and families—will receive no rebates" under the Bush bill, according to *The Washington Post*'s Glen Kessler. Practically all of those people who were working would have paid payroll taxes and would have received a rebate based on the payroll tax. And if the rebate had been limited to lower-income people, it would have avoided the insanity of their getting nothing while, as Kessler notes, "virtually everyone in the top 20 percent of tax payers will ... receive a rebate."

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I CAN'T HELP GETTING angry over the collapse of efforts to get health care for everyone. Our goals seem to grow more modest every year. Matthew Miller, the same fellow who wrote that great urban school piece in our June issue, also has a newspaper column in which he recently pointed out that back in 1992, Bush Sr.'s health plan proposed to cover 30 million of the 34 million uninsured Americans. Today his son proposes to cover only 6 million of the now 43 million uninsured.

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THE FAILURE OF HMOs AND hospitals to tell the government and, through it, other health organizations about disciplinary actions they have taken against incompetent doctors, long a concern of this magazine, recently made the front page of *The New York Times*. The occasion was a report by the inspector general of the Department of Health and Human Services, which found that in the last decade, 60 percent of hospitals, and a whopping 84 percent of HMOs, did not report a single "adverse action" against any of their doctors. HMOs, according to the IG, "have little incentive to devote many resources to quality assessment and improvement." Another factor, according to Margaret O'Kane, the head of an accreditation agency: "Health plans are very nervous about reporting to the data bank because they are afraid of being sued by doctors."

As for the hospitals, some of them will even hire or retain on their staffs doctors who have had serious disciplinary problems. New York Methodist Hospital, according to another *Times* story, kept one physician on staff even though he had performed three unnecessary hysterectomies, two without conducting a physical examination of the patient before surgery. Why was the doctor retained in the face of this evidence? We don't know for sure, but consider that in just one year, his practice "generated $1.62 million in charges, placing him in the top 10 percent of all doctors who admitted patients at the hospital that year."

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YOU MAY HAVE HEARD ABOUT Jay Harris, the publisher of *The San Jose Mercury-News*, who resigned in protest against the threat to his paper's editorial quality from its parent company's insistence on maintaining a 20-percent annual growth in profit. I admire his stand. It's not that I think profit growth is bad. Indeed, it can produce income to make a paper better. But when it threatens to diminish quality, it threatens the very thing that may have attracted readers and gained their loyalty. We need more media owners who are willing to forgo profit for the sake of quality, owners who are prouder of the good they are doing than of the money they are making. Here at the *Monthly*, we were blessed by having such backers when we started, and by a staff that has been equally indifferent to money. This is not easy. Among other things, it requires better-paid spouses. But it does confer a glorious immunity against having to do anything you're ashamed of—like taking cigarette ads—in the pursuit of profit. You can write what you believe, and that, I assure you, feels very good. ●

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The CIA's Weakest Link

Forget James Bond. What intelligence agencies need are a few good professors.

BY LOCH JOHNSON

EARLY ONE MORNING IN OCTOBER 1994, Secretary of Defense William J. Perry rose from behind his oversized desk to greet General John Shalikashvili, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). Under his arm, the general carried a portfolio of satellite photographs of Iraq. He spread the imagery across a conference table in the drab, bunker-like room.

Using a pointer, Shalikashvili directed Perry's attention to a disturbing set of photographs. Improbable as it might have seemed coming just three and a half years after a United States-led coalition blasted Saddam Hussein to his knees, elements of the Republican Guard (Saddam's elite troops), supported by mechanized infantry, armor, and tank units, were moving at a rapid clip southward toward Al Basrah, a mere 30 miles from the Kuwaiti border. The force aimed like an arrow at the Al Jahra heights overlooking Kuwait City, in an apparent repeat of the same maneuver that led to the Iraqi conquest of Kuwait in 1990. At its current speed, the Republican Guard would pour across the Kuwaiti border in a couple of days.

Perry quickly ordered a U.S. armored brigade stationed in Kuwait to the Iraqi border. With a rising sense of uneasiness, the secretary of defense and the top Pentagon brass waited as young captains and lieutenants brought new batches of imagery into Perry's office over the next 24 hours. Upwards of 10,000 Iraqi troops had amassed in an area near Al Basrah. Steadily the number rose to 50,000, some bivouacking within 12 miles of the border. The American brigade had arrived, but consisted of only 2,000 lightly armed Marines.

While the United States also had 200 warplanes in the area on standby alert, the Iraqi armored force dwarfed the U.S. presence. President Bill Clinton ordered 450 more warplanes to Kuwait, along with the 24th Mechanized Infantry Division and a Marine contingent from Camp Pendleton. The aircraft carrier *George Washington* steamed toward the Red Sea. None of these forces, though, would arrive in time to halt an invasion of Kuwait. The secretary of defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff faced the strong possibility of a rout that would quickly wipe away the small American brigade assembled at the border.

When the next set of photos arrived, Perry and Shalikashvili could finally sigh with relief. The Iraqi troops had suddenly stopped and some elements were already turning back toward Baghdad.

The good news was that photographic intelligence may have prevented the outbreak of another war in the Persian Gulf. "Had the intelligence arrived three or four days later, it would have been too late," recalls a high-ranking official who followed the events in the Pentagon during those tense autumn days. But the episode carried bad news with it, too. Even though vital intelligence had arrived in time to allow Perry a chance to put up some semblance of defense at the border, the thousands of troops in the Republican Guard would have overwhelmed the single Marine brigade. The best the secretary could hope for was that the Marines would intimidate Saddam. Fortunately, the bluff worked.

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Retrospective studies of the satellite photography taken of Iraq before the crisis disclosed palpable clues that, for weeks, Saddam had been gathering another invasion force near Baghdad. The photos showed trickles of Iraqi troops and armor moving toward Al Basrah that would eventually turn into a threatening flood.

Intelligence analysts in the National Photographic Intelligence Center had missed these signs, as had everyone at the CIA. The problem hadn't been lack of information; high-ranking government officials have access to enough paperwork and imagery each day to cover every desk in the Pentagon. But photos are just photos and, apparently, nobody had looked through them carefully enough to notice the accretion of troop buildups that signaled the possibility of an invasion.

That close call in the Middle East should have been a rude awakening to the nation's intelligence agencies that their analytical capacities were not up to snuff. Yet today, the nation's spy agencies are still relying on a technological edge to keep the country abreast of looming international crises, and are giving short shrift to the people who synthesize and interpret the mounds of intelligence pouring in from around the globe. The resulting analytical failures have shown up repeatedly since 1994 in a string of embarrassing—and often deadly—disasters.

• In 1999, CIA and other intelligence analysts provided bombing coordinates for NATO that designated the Chinese embassy in Belgrade as a local arms depot. Satellite-guided bombs from a B-2 NATO bomber killed three members of the embassy staff, injured 20 more, and sparked a wave of anti-American nationalism in China that continues to be felt, most recently in the Chinese leadership's truculent response to the U.S. Navy spy plane incident this spring.

• Also in 1999, the congressional Cox Report disclosed the possibility that a Chinese intelligence agent inside the Los Alamos Nuclear Laboratory had stolen nuclear weapons secrets. Subsequent reporting by *The Washington Post* indicated that, four years prior to the Cox Report, the CIA had acquired 13,000 technical documents from a Chinese defector that pointed to the theft of U.S. nuclear secrets, yet the agency had never gotten around to translating the documents into English.

• Last year, a suicide bomber detonated a dinghy full of explosives next to the *U.S.S. Cole* in the Yemeni port of Aden, killing 17 Navy personnel and nearly sinking the warship.

• Despite mounds of evidence that trouble was brewing, intelligence agencies failed to predict the latest outbreak of violence in Macedonia (see "Missing the Boat In Macedonia," p. 12).

In the aftermath of the *Cole* bombing, former Secretary of the Navy John Lehman criticized "the obscene failure of intelligence" to anticipate the attack. He dismissed America's intelligence efforts as a "$30-billion jobs program that takes the most wondrous products of space and electronic technology and turns them into useless mush."

This kind of criticism—along with the litany of disasters that preceded it—recently prompted President George W. Bush to order a comprehensive review of the nation's intelligence capabilities. The review, due to arrive on the president's desk by summer's end, is designed to gauge how well equipped America's secret agencies are to cope with the complex array of new and lingering challenges that confront the United States in the aftermath of the Cold War. To judge from their recent record, the answer may be: not too well.

Fading Images

At their best, agents and spy machines (whether satellites, telephone taps, or some other mechanical means) operate in harmony to provide a full and accurate portrait of international events for intelligence analysts who synthesize and interpret the information for Washington decision-makers.

During the Cold War, satellite imagery grew more reliable, and analysts grew increasingly better at interpreting those images. As a result, neither the United States nor the Soviet Union could expect to mount a major attack without tipping off one another's spy satellites—a vital component of deterrence that helped to keep peace. The photographs from space, augmented by signals intelligence and agent espionage, calmed the nuclear angst and relaxed trigger fingers in both ideological camps by reducing the likelihood that a World War III could quickly ignite by way of a blitz attack or a misunderstanding. The sophisticated machines also allowed the pursuit of arms-control accords with a reasonably high level of confidence that serious cheating could be detected.

In more recent years, humans and machines have worked together synergistically to apprehend leading terrorists, among them Carlos the Jackal in Sudan, as well as the suspected ringleader of the World Trade Center bombing in the Philippines and two Libyan intelligence officers convicted in the bombing of Pan Am 103. In one of the CIA's least heralded but most striking accomplishments, a combination of wiretaps, agent reports, and savvy analysis led to the capture in 1992 of Abimael Guzman, the founder of the Shining Path guerrilla movement in Peru, and to the arrest in 1999 of its leader, Ramirez Durand (aka Feliciano).

But such triumphs are becoming few and far

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between. In a time of accelerated technological advances around the globe, the United States faces serious challenges in trying to stay one step ahead of its potential enemies.

For instance, its current edge in satellite photography is rapidly eroding. In 1999, the private U.S. company Space Imaging launched a surveillance satellite named Ikonos II that yields photographs almost as detailed as the American government's most secret satellite photography, pictures of almost any part of the planet for sale to anyone with cash or a credit card. Within a few years, Iraq and other pariah nations will be able to manufacture homegrown spy satellites or acquire commercially available substitutes (the Rent-a-Satellite option) which will provide them with their own capacity for battlefield transparency—a huge advantage for the United States during the Persian Gulf War.

Failure to spot nuclear tests in a democracy like India doesn't inspire confidence in our ability to monitor rogue states.

America's advantages in signals intelligence are in decline as well. The listening satellites of the National Security Agency (NSA) are designed to capture analog communications from out of the air. The world, though, is rapidly switching to digital cell phones, along with underground and undersea fiber-optic modes of transmission—glass conduits that rely on light waves instead of electrons to carry information.

These new forms of communication are much harder to tap, leaving the NSA with a sky full of increasingly irrelevant satellites. Furthermore, the NSA has traditionally depended on its skills at decoding to gain access to foreign diplomatic communications, but nations and terrorist groups are becoming more clever at encrypting their messages with complex, computer-based technologies that can stymie even the most experienced NSA code-breakers.

If the United States wants to maintain its edge in the coming decades, spy agenices are going to have to rely on much more than fancy gadgets. They're going to require more, smarter people using those gadgets, deciphering what comes back, and figuring out new ways to capture information. Yet the number and quality of people who do that critical work—the lowly intelligence analysts—seems to be declining precisely at the time that other changes in the world of intelligence make their role even more important.

Snake-Eaters v. The Ivory Tower

The romantic image of the CIA agent is that of the old-fashioned James Bond spy, or the kinds of characters who light up the pages of John Le Carré novels. The real-life counterparts to these fictional heroes are the CIA's case officers, people who live abroad for much of their careers, often in very dangerous settings, and are responsible for recruiting and handling native agents who steal secrets for the United States. Some case officers—the paramilitary specialists—are macho war fighters sporting blue-tinted aviation glasses, well-defined biceps, and a certain swagger. Their roles in blowing up bridges in Vietnam and Laos in the 1960s and early 1970s earned them the monikers "knuckle-draggers" and "snake-eaters," evoking the image of men crawling on their bellies through dense jungles.

Case officers dominate the culture of the CIA; their bravado and braggadocio have helped overshadow the equally critical role of—and growing need for—the intelligence analyst. Analysts are the scholars within the intelligence agencies, usually Ph.D.s who are country or regional experts. During the CIA's early days, the stereotypical analyst was an Ivy League professor-on-leave, replete with elbow-patched tweed jacket, button-down collar, and old-boy striped tie; today, analysts are less tweedy and come from a wide range of colleges. Most have an academic air about them and refer to the CIA's 258-acre compound in Virginia as "the campus."

Reportedly numbering a couple of thousand at the CIA, analysts are expected to sift through secret information stolen from abroad by CIA case officers and their agents, blend this information with facts found in the public domain, and prepare reports.

Analysts are supposed to be—and usually are—thoughtful, unbiased, and empirical, with sharp eyes for nuance and the academic's training to consider every perspective. Their workplace is the library, increasingly the virtual one inside a word processor which connects them to other analysts throughout the 13 secret agencies in a secure network called Interlink.

Culturally, analysts stand out in sharp relief from case officers, who are widely considered the CIA's elite—especially by themselves. Often the two cultures clash. "The analysts are a bunch of academics," a former CIA director told me, "while [case officers] would be entirely comfortable in the Marine Corps."

Until 1995, case officers had a special suite of offices at CIA headquarters, closed off from analysts by com-

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bination locks. In an attempt to overcome this chasm, an experiment in "co-location" is currently under way, seating a small percentage of case officers and analysts together at CIA headquarters. Already, though, some case officers have skittered away from this "partnership," as if from an unappealing blind date.

Over the years, case officers have been afforded increasing status at the CIA. Indeed, the agency's top position has been filled from the ranks of case officers a number of times but only once by an analyst (Robert M. Gates from 1991-93). This fact, and even more importantly, the dismissive attitude of case officers toward them, has bruised the morale of analysts, and helps explain why the agency is suffering from a dramatic lack of analytic brainpower.

Between 1993 and 1997, fully 1,000 analysts retired from the CIA alone—a one-third reduction, back to 1977 levels. By the year 2005, CIA director George Tenet anticipates that up to 40 percent of the workforce at the agency will have served for five years or less. As a result, the secret agencies lack enough talented interpreters of information to make sense of the data that flood their offices. On the eve of the Persian Gulf War, the Defense Intelligence Agency had only two analysts assigned to study intelligence on Iraq.

Across the board of the various intelligence methods, America's analytic depth is uncomfortably shallow. Imagery analysis in particular has suffered from inadequate attention. The hundreds of photographs a day that return to the United States from surveillance satellites have overwhelmed interpreters. A senior congressional staffer with responsibilities for intelligence oversight recently complained that "less than half of the pictures taken by our satellites ever get looked at by human eyes," or, for that matter, "by any sort of mechanized device or computerized device detecting change."

Indian Food

On May 11, 1998, two months after taking office, India's new ruling party, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), detonated three nuclear weapons in the country's first underground test since 1974. The Clinton administration learned about the test through a BJP press release.

Missing the Boat In Macedonia

By Laura Rozen

As I write, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, a country I reported from for several months in 1999, is on the verge of civil war. After months of escalating clashes between Macedonian security forces and armed Albanian guerillas demanding greater rights for the country's Albanian minority, a shaky ceasefire holds while the country's leaders debate a last-ditch peace plan. If the peace talks collapse, Macedonia could go the way of Bosnia and Kosovo, with mass killings, ethnic cleansing, and NATO troops deployed eventually to police the border between ethnic groups for years to come. Even worse, refugees and other fallout from the war could destabilize neighboring countries, including Albania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Greece.

If ever there was a conflict that Washington should have seen coming, this would seem to be it. Macedonia is not some mysterious, impenetrable land, like North Korea, where good intelligence is hard to come by. Thousands of GIs and scores of U.S. intelligence agents have been on the ground in that Balkan nation since 1993, when the West first became seriously concerned that Yugoslav fighting would spill over into Macedonia. The U.S. embassy in Skopje, the Macedonian capital, is chock-full of experienced Balkan hands. Hundreds of journalists like me made Skopje our base for covering the 1999 war in Kosovo. Every conceivable non-governmental organization, from Doctors Without Borders to UNICEF, has staff people working in Macedonia.

And yet virtually none of us—not the journalists, the diplomats, humanitarians, or spooks—saw this war coming. True, the future is always unknowable. But in this case, a crystal ball wasn't needed. The warning signs were there for all to see. We just failed to interpret them correctly.

Indeed, a year and a half before the fighting broke out, Macedonian newspapers were running front-page stories about armed Albanians training in the Sar Mountains near Macedonia's northwestern border with Kosovo. The guerillas even gunned down four Macedonian police officers 13 months before the recent fighting broke out, and issued official communiqués calling themselves the "Albanian National Army." Few in the West noticed, and those who did discounted the significance. By December of last year, U.S. government officials were becoming concerned about reports of increased arms flowing from Kosovo into Macedonia. But no one seems to have put two and two together.

No one, that is, except John Schindler. A Balkans expert at the American Enterprise Institute, Schindler published an article in *Jane's Intelligence Review* on Nov. 1, 2000, basically predicting the clashes that would break out three months later. How could Western intelligence ana-

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America's intelligence agencies had been well aware that the Indians intended to accelerate their nuclear program. After all, this is what top-level party officials had been saying publicly throughout the Indian election season. Even the average tourist wandering around India in the spring of 1998 and listening to the local media would have concluded that a resumption of the program was likely. What surprised the intelligence agencies was how fast the test had taken place.

It was "a good kick in the ass for us," admits a senior CIA official. In part, the miscalculation was a result of what a CIA inquiry into the matter referred to as "mirror-imaging." Agency analysts assumed that Indian politicians were just like their American counterparts: Both made a good many campaign promises, few of which were ever kept. To win votes for boldness, Indian politicians in the victorious party had promised a nuclear test; now that the election hoopla was over, surely they would back away from this rash position. Such was the thinking at the CIA.

Officials in India also successfully evaded America's spy satellites. The Indians knew exactly when the satellite cameras would be passing over the nuclear testing facility in the Rajasthan Desert; in synchrony with these flights (every three days), scientists camouflaged their preparations. Ironically, U.S. officials had explicitly informed the Indian government about the timing of U.S. satellite coverage for South Asia in hopes of impressing upon them the futility of trying to conceal test activity. Even without this unintended assistance, though, the Indians could have figured out the cycles for themselves; even amateur astronomers can track the orbits of spy satellites.

Moreover, the Indians had become adroit at deception, both technical and political. On the technical side, the ground cables normally moved into place for a nuclear test were nowhere to be seen in U.S. satellite photographs of the site. The Indians had devised less visible ignition techniques. The Indians also stepped up activities at their far-removed missile-testing site in an attempt to draw the attention of spy cameras away from the nuclear testing site. On the political side, Indian officials expanded their coordinated deception operation by misleading American and other international diplo-

lysts and diplomats have missed this?

After numerous interviews with U.S. diplomats, western monitors, intelligence analysts, and other officials involved in Macedonia, I think there were four reasons. First, the situation in the Balkans in general, and in Macedonia specifically, seemed to be improving. Democratic forces had ousted Slobodon Milosevic from power in Serbia. Moderate Albanians defeated former guerrillas in recent Kosovo local elections. Most Albanians gave no sense that their grievances would bubble over into unrest. Indeed, in the past two years, Albanians had seen their share of influence in Macedonia's government grow, including taking the helm of five government ministries.

Second, Western officials discounted predictions of an Albanian insurgency because, aside from Schindler, those making the predictions were the "bad guys": Macedonian Slav nationalists who were openly hateful towards Albanians and, in some cases, linked to Milosevic's regime in Belgrade. Meanwhile, the "good guys," Macedonia's Albanian and Slav moderates, were downplaying and even denying the existence of the guerillas. Reports of an organized Albanian militant group in Macedonia were seen as pure propaganda created by Serbia's intelligence services.

Third, most Western officials, journalists, and others had bought into the notion that Macedonia represented a multi-ethnic success story. The State Department's yearly human rights report on Macedonia portrayed it—accurately—as one of the more gentle governments in the region. Those impressions were buoyed by the limited evidence of hatred and street violence in Macedonia compared to Bosnia, Serbia, and Kosovo; its lack of police state excesses; and general easy-going manner. Macedonia seemed to be a living refutation of the idea that "ancient ethnic hatreds" doomed the Balkans to war and partition. Today, after five months of skirmishes between separatists and the military, the Macedonian citizenry still hasn't taken up arms. But the violence has deeply soured inter-ethnic relations, and if political leaders can't reach a peace settlement, Macedonia seems fated for a breakup or partition.

Fourth, and perhaps most crucially, Westerners, especially in government, had deep institutional reasons for wanting to believe that violence wouldn't erupt. It would have meant pressure for the United States and NATO to get more involved in the region at a time when all the political pressure—especially with the probability of the Bush administration coming to power—was toward disengagement.

Though the facts were there, Western intelligence analysts and diplomats fell prey to what the AEI's Schindler calls "willful disbelief." Schindler says he spoke with some U.S. officials in the weeks before the fighting began, but that in general they dismissed his warnings as alarmist. "They saw the facts but hoped for the best."

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mats about the impending nuclear test, offering assurances that it was simply not going to happen.

Finally, a dearth of reliable intelligence agents contributed to the CIA's blindness. During the Cold War, South Asia received limited attention from the U.S. intelligence agencies, compared to their concentration on the Soviet Union and its surrogates.

India's nuclear test was the most egregious intelligence failure since the Cold War. Not only did it pinpoint weaknesses in the U.S.'s analytical capabilities, but it also showed just how little the intelligence agencies have been adapting to post-Cold War reality. The failure to recruit both agents and analysts with expertise on South Asia seems especially glaring in light of the fact that the United States had a large potential pool of recruits for the job. Over the past decade, the United States has imported thousands of Indians for high-tech jobs, and many of India's nuclear scientists had been trained at American universities.

American citizens may have wondered with a reasonable sense of indignation—not to say outrage—why their well-funded intelligence community proved ignorant of what was going on inside the largest democracy and one of the most open countries in the world. Indeed, India was low-hanging fruit. Far more difficult than keeping an eye on India is the challenge of gaining access to intelligence on reclusive renegade states like Iraq, Iran, Libya, and North Korea. It is difficult as well to keep track of companies engaged in commercial transactions that aid and abet the spread of weaponry, like the German corporations that secretly assisted in the Iraqi weapons buildup and the construction of the large chemical weapons plant at Rabta in Libya.

Assalaam Alaikum

The failure of the nation's intelligence agencies to anticipate events in a democracy like India doesn't instill confidence in their ability to deal with more complicated assignments. Their growing list of debacles since India's nuclear tests suggests that radical changes are still needed within our secret agencies.

More money is not the answer. The intelligence agencies are already bloated. Instead, the agencies need a shift in priorities with less focus on the gathering of information and more focus on the harder job of providing insights into what that information means.

The intelligence agencies have begun to take some modest steps in the right direction. To remedy the staff deficiencies, the intelligence agencies are currently undertaking their largest recruitment effort since the 1950s. According to a CIA official, the ideal profile for a new recruit is an "Arabic-speaking second generation American living in Detroit." Assuming these ideal rookies can be found and persuaded to join the CIA, they must be thoroughly trained before they are sent overseas. "We need to recruit talent, grow it, and nurture it," emphasizes another senior CIA official, who points to a further difficulty: "And this means paying and promoting area experts in a way that is competitive with the private sector."

This is not an easy task, when today's government salaries are substantially below what smart young people can draw in the business world. The problem is additionally compounded because the CIA has lost the sheen that made it a magnet for the best and the brightest young people in the first two decades after World War II, and its recent litany of failures surely doesn't help.

The top-to-bottom intelligence review that President Bush ordered in May should seek to elevate the importance of analysis in the intelligence agencies. This can be done by hiring more analysts, especially individuals with knowledge, language skills, and experience of the world that lies beyond Russia and Europe. Analysts must be paid more, and given increased opportunities to travel and live abroad, rather than being tethered to their PCs at headquarters.

Analysts must be encouraged to mingle more extensively with scholars in the universities and think tanks, submitting their papers (sans classified items) to academic journals refereed by outside peers. They should also attend more open academic conferences on world affairs, and invite more outside scholars to participate in the CIA's internal discussions about international issues. And outsiders should be invited more frequently to join in the writing of reports for top decision-makers, or to provide critiques of CIA reports—although with the caveat that ideologues with policy axes to grind should be avoided.

Future presidents would do well, in addition, to appoint a leading analyst as CIA director. This would send a signal that analysis lies at the very heart of good decision-making for America's foreign policy. All this is a tall order. But what better time than now for bringing about change, when the world is relatively tranquil and the record of intelligence performance fairly shouts for reform?

The newly elected president—the son of the most popular man ever to serve as CIA director, George H.W. Bush, after whom the CIA's headquarters building is named—may be just the person who can set things straight. But Bush will have to make sure this latest review is not just for show. Left to its own devices, the intelligence bureaucracy will merely tinker at the margins and America's secret agencies will continue their drift toward obsolescence. ●

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Mean Cuisine

Gone is the Joy of Cooking. Today's celebrity chefs are serving up a menu of global doom and politically twisted snobbery.

By Greg Critser

Last year, Alice Waters, the originator of California cuisine and the reigning moral conscience of American cooking, sat down and wrote a letter to the president of the United States that she hoped would, in time, completely change the way Americans view the food they eat. In the letter, Waters took the president up on a pledge he had made to her at a recent fundraising dinner—namely, that he would consider planting an organic vegetable garden on the White House lawn.

It was the kind of "consideration" that any good politician proffers while eating a million-dollar bowl of organic pecan ice cream, the kind that Bill Clinton was particularly good at proffering. When Waters told the president that she would even "send the seeds" and then "come and plant them," the gastronomically kvelling chief executive had responded: "You do that, Alice!"

But a few months later, after a follow-up letter failed to evoke the same spirited commitment, Waters cued up a lobbying campaign, drafting a cadre of like-minded friends—among them California Senator Barbara Boxer and the homemaking entrepreneur Martha Stewart—to write similar letters. Again, no luck. The president wrote back, but now he was saying such things as "an informal kitchen garden would not be in keeping with the formal gardens of the White House," and promising, as a sop, to put "a vegetable garden" on the roof of the executive residence. Well, that wasn't what they had discussed. Waters sent off another letter.

What Waters wanted was a "national monument" to organic agriculture—Olympic-sized compost heaps, espaliered pear trees, edible topiaries—a Versailles of the American Georgic! "I meant it!" she assured me a few months later, when we met for an interview at Berkeley's Acme Bakery. "This is important stuff for me and for the country! Because I have a vision that, if things don't change, my grandkids won't even know what a real apple tastes like! So [the White House garden] was important."

Perhaps. But in the early 21st century, one might imagine that world peace, global warming, or even the price of gasoline might also compete for a commander-in-chief's limited attention. More to the point: If one were to contemplate seriously a monument to American agriculture, it would certainly not be organic agriculture, which provides a negligible portion of the nation's everyday vittles (and which would wreak its own environmental havoc on vast swaths of virgin land if prescribed for the world's hungry). No, the proper monument to American farming would more likely be a manicured stand of Monsanto sugar beets, arranged around a statue of a modern farmer perched inside his air conditioned tractor—Georgius Mechanicus, if you will.

Yet, as Alice and I talked, I came to realize the true significance of her letter: In 21st-century America, chefs preach. And preach and preach and preach and preach...

Chefs have always preached. But historically they did it to other chefs. Writing about the excesses of nouvelle cuisine in the 1983 edition of *French Provincial Cooking*, the noted cook and author Elizabeth David warned her fellows of "a certain coldness and ungenerosity of spirit, an indifference to the customer." In his 1825 *The Physiology of Taste*, Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, the grandfather of modern culinary writing, cautioned against burdening the customer with the concerns of the chef.

Later on, when chefs did preach to the diner, theirs was a message of middle-class joy. To Julia Child and Betty Crocker, for example, great food was that which the average consumer could buy at the supermarket, take home, and cook.

But today's chefs, particularly today's celebrity chefs, cleave to a different hortatory, one directed not at each other but almost entirely at the diner, the ultimate vessel of their commerce. And a big and politically influential

Greg Critser's *book on the modern obesity epidemic will be published by Houghton-Mifflin in 2002. He is based in Pasadena, Calif.*

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commerce that is. Once confined to a few postwar technocrats like Child and Crocker, today, dozens of celebrity chefs compete to hawk their wares on QVC and the Food Network. Their expensive cookbooks, inevitably given away during pledge drives, tutor the viewers of public broadcasting. Touring the country giving cooking demos in upmarket suburban malls, they are nothing less than modern pashas in toques.

But they aren't just peddling a better risotto or personalized nonstick skillets. Today's celebrity chefs have assumed a graver mission: to school the country—or at least its aspiring elites—on the politics of food. Gone is Betty Crocker's vibrant optimism. Today's activist chefs are dour. From their menus to their multimedia bully pulpits, more and more of America's big chefs routinely preach not a joyful gospel of God's great abundance, but rather a message of doom and scarcity, as if the 20th century and the agricultural revolution had never happened.

In their worldview, food is no longer something to be enjoyed; it is something to be feared and understood through a complicated set of new rules that acknowledge the global implications of every plate of pâté. Though most Americans just want to have fun and tuck into a good meal, spending upwards of $128 billion on high-end dining every year, the uptown chefs just can't lighten up. Instead, they increasingly serve up a message of humorless moral suasion that increasingly ends up on the plates of policymakers around the world.

Consider:

• Addressing a press conference on genetically modified (GM) foods in Washington last year, Peter Hoffman, chef and owner of New York's upscale Savoy restaurant, proclaimed: "We do not need golden rice." (Golden rice, which is engineered with a breakthrough technology to deliver vitamin A, helps Third World children ward off blindness, a disability that afflicts some 200 million in Africa alone.) Hoffman then went on to issue a sweeping condemnation of the Nobel Prize-honored Green Revolution, the mix of hybrid seeds, irrigation and fertilization techniques credited with saving more than a billion people from starvation in the '60s and '70s. "The Green Revolution was a dismal failure," Hoffman told the attendees. "We don't need it now; we didn't need it then."

• Speaking to an incoming class of young chefs, Eve Feldon, chef and associate dean of the influential Culinary Institute of America, proclaimed, "It is up to us to share ... what the right thing is: what it means to buy immature tuna ... what it means to buy perfect-looking apples ... what it means to purchase food locally and to pay the real cost of growing it. So customers know they're eating in a place that is thinking about how the food is grown, produced, packaged, and delivered."

• Inveighing against the "unnaturalness" of imported foods, Peter Berley, cookbook author and former executive chef of New York's Angelica Kitchen, told the *Boston Herald*, "A child could tell you that there are no pumpkins in August, and if you could import them from somewhere, they wouldn't taste right. If we get strawberries from New Zealand in February, what did it take to get that strawberry to Boston? Not only does that berry not taste very good, but there's a great expense that is hidden, and it's an expense to the planet."

• Headlining a recent press conference for the Chef's Collaborative, a professional organization dedicated to "changing the way people make their food choices," Chicago chef and restaurateur extraordinaire Charlie Trotter asserted of GM foods, "This untested technology diminishes the purity and taste of food." For this he offered no evidence. Trotter was joined at the same podium by Alice Waters, who was even less equivocating. "Flat out," she pronounced, "No genetic engineering."

Witness, then, the new cuisine of trepidation. But why now? Why, in a time of unprecedented abundance for everyone—vine-ripened Mexican tomatoes for $1 a pound! World-class reds and whites from Montepulciano d'Abruzzo for $5 a bottle! An international glut of inexpensive extra virgin olive oils and cheeses and nuts and fruits at Trader Joe's and Price Club!—why oh why are the chefs of America so dour, so chary—so very very very bummed out? To find out, I got on the high road.

Selling Jeremiah's Diet

If there is a culinary mecca in Southern California, a place where the high foodie meets the ideal ingredient, it is the Santa Monica Farmers' Market, held every Wednesday under almost invariably balmy, blue skies. God, it seems, shines on organic farmers.

One such Wednesday I met up with Evan Kleiman, chef and co-founder of Angeli Café, perhaps one of the most successful Italian restaurants in L.A. and certainly one of the most influential. Kleiman also hosts a local PBS radio show about food and matters culinary. It was there, between lively interviews with quirky orange growers and serious digressions about the acidic content of various olive oils, that I first detected a note of angst in her otherwise unperturbed and worldly countenance.

"Basically, when it comes to food and the food supply, I find it frightening that something so fundamental to life has been left to people whose only concern is profit," she told me. "I mean, as far as I can see, because of that, there are now only two kinds of people putting food in their mouths—the ones who've lost the notion

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that food is something made by human hands, and then there are the others—and not very many, mind you—for whom there's still some link with food as a culture of nurturance."

But is that really true? I asked. It seemed to me that there was more variety available than ever before, and for increasingly affordable prices, to boot. Just the other day I had driven downtown to the Grand Central Market in L.A.'s booming Latino core and bought three pounds of peaches for a dollar. True, they weren't as luscious as the $3-a-pound peaches being hawked at the certified organic market here today, but they weren't bad, especially if you put them in a bag for a few days to ripen and...

Kleiman cut me off, amiably. "That's the whole problem. We're now spending less for food than we ever have, and it shouldn't be that way. We should spend more on food to support farmers like those guys"—she gestured at a few fellows trudging by with flats of organic tomatoes ($3.50 a pound)—"we should support their ideals." She then described the essentials of the modern foodie ethos: "Locally grown, seasonally grown, sustainably grown."

In the worldview of celebrity chefs, food must be feared and understood through rules that acknowledge the global implications of every plate of paté.

Although this mantra is hardly news to the affluent urbanites who frequent farmers' markets and giant health food stores with names like "Whole Foods" and "Wild Oats," it *is* news to the large numbers of Americans who don't. For these Americans—the poor, the working class, the struggling middle class, and even a good swag of the suburban class—food is an increasingly global, seasonless, and tasty phenomenon. At urban bodegas all across the country, one finds in May whole cases of mangos being hawked for a paltry $5. Outside my local Rite Aid, in December, a fellow from Seoul invariably sets up a stand selling Mexican strawberries for $4.50 a case. Today, on the freeway on-ramp, I even saw a Mayan guy selling bags of tiny finger plantains for a buck. In the grand pageant of millennial consumerism, it is six-pack Americans—José and Vikram and Mr. Kim and Billy Lee—who are the real moderns, not their striving Bobo counterparts.

Their delights come from around the world. Consider the role of Chile, international purveyor of low-cost tomatoes, nectarines, and other fruits. Ten years ago, that nation's farmers knew nothing about growing food for the U.S. market. Today they sell 70 percent of their production here. The same goes for Peru and Ecuador, Mexico and Guatemala, China and Thailand—all now among our biggest agricultural trading partners.

The high foodie inevitably objects to such imports. As one audience member put it at a recent Chef's Collaborative symposium, "These nations are wrecking havoc on the environment and infiltrating our food supply with toxic, bland vegetables."

But that is an increasingly porous notion. Demand for sophisticated integrated pest management systems, which minimize but don't eliminate the use of costly chemicals, has soared worldwide. Just as in the United States, foreign farmers have cut back dramatically on pesticide and herbicide use. Many have found, to the frank consternation of chemical companies, that a quarter cup of the herbicide Roundup, applied at just the right time, achieves what a quart does when applied indiscriminately.

One result is that foreign produce and domestic produce look increasingly alike. The most recent report from the USDA's Pesticide Data Program, for example, shows that imports have quickly reached a quality near that of U.S. produce. Of all domestic fruits sampled by the department in 1999, only 0.6 percent had excess pesticide residues, while only 1.8 percent of imported fruits had excess residues. And while the USDA sampled twice as many imports as it did domestic farm products, both categories registered a growing percentage of food completely free of any residues. In 1999, the percentage of completely chemical-free domestic food samples was 60.2 percent. The percentage of chemical-free imports was 65 percent. José, in other words, was growing cheap clean food in Mexico for Juan, who had moved to L.A.

But I was making little headway with Evan Kleiman. The more I argued for supporting the globe's grand bounty, the more she worried how such a world might affect the good yeomanry just outside our café window, the heirloom-peach vendors and the heirloom-tomato growers.

"There's a world of difference between ADM and organic," she said, referring to Archer Daniels Midland, the enormous farming conglomerate. "That's the world you see right in front of you. And, frankly, some of those guys out here aren't 100 percent organic. But they are trying and barely making it. Which is why I can't stand it when I see all these people bargaining with them!"

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So I shouldn't bargain? "Shame! Shame! Remember," she said, an eyebrow raised with half-mock theatricality. "Before the famine there is always great abundance. But the famine ... the famine always comes."

The Lament of the Green Papaya

The famine, if it's coming, will probably not arrive first in Napa Valley, which today overflows with contemporary American abundance—hundreds of wineries, food boutiques, and world-class restaurants. On a boiling afternoon last summer I met with Shuna Lydon Fish, then pastry chef at Napa's Bouchon restaurant and one of the valley's upcoming culinary stars. (The restaurant is an offshoot of the famed French Laundry, also in Napa, which *The New York Times* critic Ruth Reichl called the "most interesting place to dine in America.")

Fish did not go to culinary school, but instead worked her way through the ranks of various New York and Bay Area restaurants before coming to the attention of Thomas Keller, owner and chef of the French Laundry. Keller's focus has always been on the perfect crafting of perfect ingredients—tiny, edible, fetishistic performances of, say, a single quail egg with a single spear of asparagus. Young Fish's own sensibilities fit right in, and she took up the organic flag.

"Today, for example, my stone-fruit supplier was making me almost crazy." She stopped for a second and brushed back a tear. "I'm sorry, this gets me emotional. But, anyway, she came by to tell me that she's going to have to tear out her orchard because she can't afford to maintain the operation without selling her cherries for $5 a pound. And you can't believe these cherries! The other day I got some that were so good that I simply put them in a bowl and sent them out as a finished dessert.

Who's Who

By Sean Theriault

From their relentless pursuit of tax cuts for the wealthy—cuts that could bring back deficits—it's clear that the people running the **Bush** White House can be lured into reckless behavior by the promise of smaller bills from the IRS. This psychological weakness may also explain how Bush's top political adviser **Karl Rove** got himself in hot water. In March, Rove met with executives from Intel Corporation. The executives used the occasion to press for federal approval of a corporate merger. At the time, Rove owned more than $100,000 of Intel stock. Less than two months later, the Justice Department approved the deal. Democrats such as Rep. **Henry Waxman** have called for an investigation. The White House insists there was no conflict of interest because Rove played no part in getting the merger approved. But what's interesting is the reason Rove waited until June to divest his stock. According to the Associated Press, he was advised by White House transition counsel **Fred Fielding** that if he waited and got something called a "government certificate of divestiture" he could "defer paying capital gains taxes on the stock sales."

Speaking of stocks, Treasury Secretary **Paul O'Neill** continues to hold part of his $100 million stake in Alcoa, the company he used to run, three months after announcing he would sell his shares. His decision to delay selling the stock, according to *Salon*'s **Jake Tapper**, could result in a $62 million windfall in large part because Department of Energy officials asked aluminum producers in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho to suspend production of aluminum for up to two years in order to save energy. This momentarily stopped production of almost 40 percent of the country's aluminum-making potential, but not Alcoa's.

The fact that so many top administration officials have big money no doubt explains some of the psychological gap that exists between them and other key Washington players. Senate Majority Leader **Tom Daschle**'s biggest financial asset is a half-share of a house in Aberdeen, S.D., given to him by his mother and worth $50,000 to $100,000, according to recently-released congressional disclosure forms. Sen. **Jim Jeffords**—the man who forced the White House to reduce its tax cut and then bolted the GOP, handing Democrats control of the Senate—listed his main asset as a home in Rutland, VT, valued at $100,001 to $250,000.

Anger over Jeffords' defection has yet to die down. The Vermont senator has received so many death threats that he has been flanked for weeks by two plainclothes Capitol Hill police officers. In the men's room of the Capitol Hill Club, a GOP hangout next to the Republican National Committee headquarters, someone put a photograph of Jeffords in a urinal. "Although several folks apparently got a kick out of taking aim at the photo of a man they now detest," reports *Roll Call* newspaper's **Ed Henry**, "a peeved member of the club ripped the photo out of the urinal, fearing it would be seen as

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My staff came back and said, you know, shouldn't we put a little cream on them or something? I said no—you couldn't do anymore—God has done it all already."

But doesn't the customer expect a little more? I asked. That, she explained, was almost beside the point. "Every day I consider what I do as educating each person who eats here," she answered. "Because in the end, that may be the most important thing I do. Especially in the United States, where we are heading toward a place where we will have no choices in the future. Americans are in denial that they are losing whole lines of fruit and whole geni of trees."

I asked Fish what she thought should be done about it. "Well," she said, weary just contemplating the matter. "We have to point the system toward sustainability—towards the ideals of organic. Because that's what we know is safer and healthier. I mean, the other day, I ate—I mean, barely licked, when I think about it—an imported papaya. And the next day I was sick. Was it food poisoning? Was it the pesticide that was probably on it?"

Here, then, was a full exposition of another key assumption of the modern foodie ethos: Residues of pesticides on food can easily make one sick. It happens all the time. It must. Yet the most recent research—by the academy, industry, and the government—suggests an entirely different situation: Modern pesticides, and modern pesticide use, may well be safer than most of us realize.

To the average American, indoctrinated by a steady stream of food scares, such a notion may sound heretical. So deep is the belief that pesticide residues routinely kill, maim, and poison us innocent fruit eaters that the most important single fact, virtually uncontested, gets

yet another symbol of the party's alleged intolerance."

Under President **Bill Clinton**, the Federal Trade Commission took an activist role, for instance, investigating Hollywood for advertising R-rated fare to teenagers. By contrast, Bush's new FTC chairman, **Timothy J. Muris**, has promised to keep the agency strictly low-impact. This can be seen in his appointment of **J. Howard Beales** to the FTC's Consumer Protection Bureau. The former consultant to R.J. Reynolds and long-time advocate of laissez-faire advertising regulation has argued that **Joe Camel** ads were not targeted at youth.

Taylor Jones, 2001 L.A. Times Syndicate

Karl Rove: Intel Man

In the spirit of bipartisanship that has swept Washington since the Senate flip, former Treasury Secretary **Larry Summers** recently joined conservative pundette **Laura Ingraham** for lunch at the Palm. "What shorthand phrase will future historians use to describe the Clinton administration?" Ingraham reportedly asked Summers. When he shrugged, she offered, "Sex between the Bushes." Whether Summers laughed at the joke could not be discerned.

A couple of months ago, "Who's Who" was wondering whether **Joseph Allbaugh** had been exiled from the White House to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) by his former pals **Karl Rove** and **Karen Hughes**. Here is another explanation: Much of what **George W. Bush** does—e.g. cutting taxes—is designed to avoid repeating apparent mistakes made by his father. In FEMA's case, miserable performance in the wake of hurricane Andrew was thought to have cost **Bush Sr.** at the polls. So it may be that it wasn't Machiavellian machinations by Rove and Hughes, but simply W.'s desire to guard against another Andrew that landed this trusted aide at FEMA.

On June 7, a dinner was held at the National Press Club to honor **N. Sanders Saul**. This, you may recall, is the judge who managed to delay the Florida recount for 11 days, making it possible for the Supreme Court to rule that the recount had run out of time. He also ruled against **Al Gore** in practically every issue and even ignored testimony by a Bush expert witness that a hand recount was the way to go. The MC at the event was Court TV's **Catherine Crier**, which should remove any doubt about where she stands.

In theory, the execution of **Timothy McVeigh** should have helped shore up flagging popular support for the death penalty. If anyone ever deserved the penalty, it's the Oklahoma City bomber. Yet even proponents of the death penalty felt strangely let down by the execution. The reason, which nobody wants to admit, is that McVeigh, for all his twisted evil, died like a soldier, bravely. We wanted him to have fear his eyes. Instead, witnesses say that he looked each of them in the eye, then stared at the ceiling and calmly awaited his fate.

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drowned in the alarmist melée. Last March the esteemed *Journal of Regulatory Toxicology and Pharmacology* put it this way: "During the past 50 years of regulating thousands of substances, there is no known case of toxicity in children from the ingestion of food additives or pesticides that were used in conformity with established tolerances. Accidental exposures, intentional abuse, illegal use, and exposure to applicators or to farm workers explain the entire inventory of cases of human toxicity to pesticides."

Other recent studies have also begun to debunk fears about long-term harm to children from residual amounts of certain commonly used agricultural chemicals found on food. Of course, not all the studies come to the same comforting conclusions, in part because there are still many chemicals whose long-term effects have not been tested. Fortunately, the Environmental Protection Agency, beginning in 1996, adopted tougher testing and tolerance requirements for pesticides and other chemicals in foods. But it is fair to say that the trend in conventional agriculture, both here and abroad, is toward the use of fewer and safer chemicals. Moreover, crops are increasingly being genetically modified to preclude the need for chemical treatment.

So why are the chefs of America telling their diners that it's dangerous to buy anything but organic? The many highly paid flacks of the chemical industry would assert (and frequently do) that said chefs are simply in the pocket of the organic-foods industry, the giant Whole Foods Corp., which, incidentally, holds a seat on the Chef's Collaborative board. But that, I can't help think, is just too easy. And irrational. It was time to talk to Alice Waters, the Cotton Mather of American cuisine.

White Blackberries and Other Protoplasm

Modern Berkeley resists most temptations of the flesh; the Temple of Gastrea, Brillat-Savarin's mythical muse of gastronomy, it isn't. Instead, Berkeley is the Ministry of Health. With dozens of food-activist organizations, a municipal council that favors organic foods in the school system, and a vegan on every corner, this well-worn city now stands as the capital of American food politics. If God doesn't shine on Berkeley, it's only because there's a municipal ordinance against it.

But God definitely shines on Waters. Her restaurant, Chez Panisse, is one of the biggest single culinary destinations in the world. In her 30 years as a professional chef, she has been the recipient of every major award the profession has to offer. Her books become instant classics. She cooks for presidents and princes and queens and prime ministers. The French government—the French!—even asked her to run a restaurant in the Louvre, to which Alice said: no.

Waters has been preaching the benefits of local, seasonal, and sustainable foods for decades now; over the past few years, she has taken to educating inner-city school kids about how to grow, harvest, and prepare such food. But by far Waters' biggest cause is her crusade against genetically modified organisms (GMOs). In her own kitchen she has ordered a complete vetting of all ingredients, so thorough that her pastry chef had to go on a worldwide search for chocolate that did not contain any soy lecithin, a miniscule but critical emulsifying element in all good chocolates. "We knew the soy could have been grown with GM soybeans, so we finally found an organic chocolate by Callebaut—$40 a pound!" Waters also put her beef supplier of 20 years on notice: Make sure your cows eat no GM corn or suffer the economic consequences.

But can't reasonable people disagree about GM foods? I asked, as we sat and had coffee and beignets one cool morning. After all, the world's leading scientists and agronomists have signed on to their use, and many of those scientists are pro-organic environmentalist types just like Alice. How had she become so dogmatic about it so early in the game?

She sighed a little, partly out of exasperation with

Art by Christina Larson

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a fellow like myself. "A lot of it boils down to what's natural and what's not," she said. "There's nothing wrong with improving plants. [Horticulturist] Luther Burbank—he did that. But he didn't violate nature doing it. This is something different altogether. I am convinced we are headed toward major trouble in the food system."

Hear, now, another assumption of the modern foodie: GM foods, being unnatural, lead to further alienation from nature. Yet the moral certainty of this romantic belief fades when stacked up against much modern research, not to mention actual history. Consider the Luther Burbank equation.

It is true that Burbank, who worked about two and a half hours up the road from Waters some 80 years ago, accomplished all of his great feats, from the Satsuma plum to the Burbank potato, using traditional cross-pollination and grafting techniques. But it is unclear what Burbank would have done had he possessed the tools to craft a perfect potato genetically.

His autobiography devotes considerable time delineating his philosophy of plant improvements. "The plant hybridizer who consciously merges two different protoplasmic streams ... participates in what must be considered the most wonderful of all experiments," Burbank wrote. And later on in his life, Burbank was inclined toward the most wondrous—"naturalness" be damned. Such was the case in 1920, when he produced the first white blackberry, which was criticized roundly, both for its "unnaturalness" and its aesthetics. As one reviewer of his day put it, "the people do not want a white blackberry. The people want a black blackberry."

More recently, "traditional" plant breeders have used techniques nearly as "unnatural" as that of their gene-tinkering brethren. Consider the Asian pear, the darling of many nouveau pastry chefs and a stalwart at any farmers' market worth its heirloom veggies. The crispy, sweet-and-tart fruit we use today was altered by post-war Japanese scientists using a technique known as mutogenesis—they exposed pear trees to cobalt radiation rays. It made the tree resistant to devastating diseases and thus easier to grow. The result is that today's ubiquitous Asian-pear strudel owes as much to nuclear pioneer Enrico Fermi, the great Italian physicist, as it does to the culinary experimenter Jean-Georges Vongerichten, the great New York chef and owner of the popular Vong restaurant.

Perhaps the single most compelling foodie argument against the "unnaturalness" of GMOs stems from their supposed ill effects on Third World farming. "GMOs do nothing but propagate more monocultures, and monocultures are the great enemy of food diversity," chef Peter Hoffman, of New York City's Savoy restaurant, recently decreed. Yet a considerable body of evidence shows that GMOs will allow for the survival of more plant and animal species by reducing the number of pesticides that ultimately concentrate in their habitat. And using herbicide-resistant soybeans dramatically reduces tillage, the soil-destroying practice of constantly turning over the soil to keep weeds down.

Today's cookbooks are prescriptions for socially acceptable snobbery.

Those factors certainly account for the enormous popularity of GM seeds in such traditional famine areas as China and India. China, in fact, has stood many of the traditional environmental objections to GMOs on their collective head. Far from enslaving peasants to ever more expensive seeds sold by monopolistic Western corporations, GM crops have liberated generations of dirt farmers from both economic dependence and destructive agricultural practices. The wild card is the relative ease of pirating GM seeds. Farmers simply plant them in an isolated field to prevent arbitrary cross-pollination, harvest the crop, bag it, and then put it on the local market. In Hubei Province alone, some 33 million acres are currently planted with pirated Monsanto cottonseed, soybeans, and corn.

The consequences have been breathtaking. In Shahexin, near the Yellow River, GM seeds have eliminated the need to spray upwards of 30 times per growing season—a practice that has for decades caused respiratory problems among the region's children.

What about the issue of "genetic drift," the notion that GM crops will cross-pollinate with adjacent "wild" equivalents, thereby erasing crucial crop diversity? Such is the theory, and such is the gist of an endless parade of news stories, most notably last season's scare about Star Link corn in taco shells (still not conclusively linked to genetic drift).

A study by plant scientists at three independent universities, recently published in the *Annual Review of Ecological Systems*, concluded that GM crops are "no more likely" than traditional commercial crops to cross-pollinate and dominate their wild brethren. Moreover, a recent study of herbicide-resistant seeds by the Department of Botany and Microbiology at Auburn University found that many GM crop genes are actually less likely to "drift" into the wild than conventional hybrids because they aren't transmitted by pollen.

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Not that these aren't legitimate concerns. Crops with built-in resistance to Roundup might lead to the evolution of Roundup-resistant weeds. (Then again, such biological cat-and-mouse games are part of the dynamic of evolution.) There is also a legitimate worry about biotech genes spreading into the non-biotech food supply, both through inadvertent cross-pollination and through poor handling by grain distributors and food processors.

The point is not that GMs are the best thing to happen since mango crème brülée. The point is that the GM jury, by most sensible measures at least, is still out. Reasonable people can disagree and find a middle ground. But that hasn't stopped the chefs and their fans from trying to ban them altogether.

NAFTA-phobia

Americans with politics akin to that of the chefs were once great supporters of new food technologies. Jack London, a socialist dockworker from Oakland who reigned as one of the early 20th century's most popular authors, was such a fan of Luther Burbank that he often collaborated with him on various plant-breeding projects, creating, for instance, a spineless cactus used for feeding cattle during droughts.

But then again, London knew something of hunger. He'd seen it in the wild. He'd felt it in his gut. This is not something that modern chefs (or for that matter, most Americans) have experienced. Cooking has instead become biography, its politically idealized ingredients a fetish to ward off an overly fecund world. Describing the psychic origins of his famous D.C. boîte, Red Sage, chef Mark Miller writes that "its origin had nothing to do with food or a restaurant. It started with my first glimpse of the West in movies. These men of the West were performing important deeds and they didn't take flak from anyone. . . . I wanted to escape my little life and be part of this fictional landscape."

But it's hard to see how denigrating imported foods with dubious claims that they're "bad for the environment" and "hurtful to local farmers" falls into that fictional landscape. Ten years ago, after all, "imported" was the rage among these very same chefs. Why the big change?

Part of the answer can be summed up in one word: abundance. Ten years ago, a pint of cold-pressed, extra-virgin Italian olive oil would set you back about $20. It was scarce, and so it was the chef's preference. Today one can buy a gallon for the same price. Today, of course, imported oil is not the chef's choice. And here is where the real twisted thinking starts: To avoid sounding like an old-fashioned snob, the modern chef instead proclaims that imported oil from big foreign farms "wrecks the earth." Or that its widespread availability will kill off good ol' Farmer Joe over in Ridley. So the "correct" oil nowadays trickles from local boutique olive farmers in, say, Napa. They cost . . . $20 per pint.

In this sense, today's menus and cookbooks have become the modern equivalent of the old etiquette book. They are simply prescriptions for socially acceptable snobbery. The snobfest itself flows from what the great historian Richard Hofstadter called "status anxiety," the sinking feeling, often felt after, say, actually *speaking* to the maid or the gardener, that the world is changing, expanding, and in the process making one smaller, less important.

While once visited upon the wealthy only every generation or so, status anxiety now seems to strike with every tick of the Dow. The culprit is globalization. Only 10 years ago the world was still divided by formidable tariffs and restrictive trade rules. Everything was a fortress—Fortress Europe, Fortress Japan, etc. Consequently, what constituted status was exotic travel, striking off for Nepal, or buying a $20 cup of Italian olive oil. Such was the comforting Raj-like mentality, prissy and white, behind the early '90s preference for Chilean sea bass and New Zealand blackberries.

Today we live in a world of unprecedented free trade. Peaches from Chile and mangos from Ecuador are as common as celebrities at an AA meeting. French goat cheese—it's actually affordable. Everyone is partying, crossing over, dancing the rumba, and eating salsa. Predictably, the food snob, led by the chefs, blanches at all of this debauchery encroaching on his gated estate. He thus turns to the home-grown, to the pseudo-yeomanry of the local farmers' market, to the long "taken for granted" local cheese makers and the "curmudgeonly" presser of Mill Valley olive oil.

Yet this social function of the cuisine of trepidation pales against its economic and cultural impact. This is because chefs have found a growing voice in public policy, which, despite all noble intentions, can negatively affect us all, organic-tomato lovers or not.

At the local level their influence arrives in the form of the growing "sustainable schoolyard" movement, founded by Alice Waters. Using both private and city funds, these programs have a laudable enough goal: to provide an alternative to the greasy fast food bacchanal known as "lunch" in the nation's public schools. In practice, they teach kids about growing their own veggies and plug local farmers into the school nutrition bureaucracy. Kids have taken to it mainly because any fruits, picked ripe, taste better.

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But that is not enough for groups like L.A.'s Urban and Environmental Policy Institute, a Waters-inspired organization that has successfully set up a number of farmer's market salad bars in public schools. The right nutritional message, according to its own "food security" reports, is to "prioritize organic." One consequence is "the kids take away a skewed—and in their economically deprived world—unattainable ideal," one of the Los Angeles Unified School District's nutrition directors told me. "They instead end up with the false notion that the only vegetables and fruits that are truly safe and conscionable to eat are organic."

At the national level, the chefs helped bring about the USDA's new organic labeling regulations. The new regulations detail exactly what organic means: no synthetic pesticides, no ionizing radiation, no genetic engineering, all signified by a new green-and-white food label. But mainly the regulations legitimize what no liberal chef dare speaketh: the historic creation of two official standards for American food, one for the rich envirophile, the other for we not-so.

And at whose expense? Even many liberal environmentalists now think that the pressure on the USDA to focus on pesticide policing has impeded the agency from fighting food-born illnesses. Food poisoning has become a growing—and much more immediately deadly—menace in the food supply, accounting for about 76 million cases a year. The Centers for Disease Control reports that 250 people a year die from a new form of *E. coli* bacteria found mainly in ground beef, and occasionally in organic produce, as the hearty bacteria is transmitted mainly through fecal matter, organic farmers' primary source of fertilizer.

These trends can only be the beginning, and they carry troubling implications. What happens if the chefs and their fellow food purists continue to get their way? What would happen, for example, if cheap produce imports were curtailed because of more stringent pesticide regulations? One answer can be found in so-called "risk trade-off studies," in which scientists weigh the cost of eliminating a pesticide against the risk of continuing its use. For years such studies were derided by environmental groups, who pointed out that they were usually the work of industry hacks.

No more. Writing in the March 2000 issue of *NeuroToxicology*, Wake Forest Medical School professor Darrell Sumner documented the potential for an increase in illnesses caused by fungi normally controlled by organophosphates. One such agent is aflatoxin, adeadly natural carcinogen often carried by insects and strongly implicated in human liver cancer. Sumner noted, "Loss of insect control would likely lead to an increased incidence of aflatoxin in the U.S. food supply."

What if GM foods are flat-out put on hold? Even many environmental groups concede that the result would be disastrous. This is because everyone from the U.N.'s Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) to the World Health Organization agree on a few key statistics. Global population between now and 2025 will likely increase by about 38 percent, from 5.8 billion to 8 billion. Most of that growth will take place in the developing world. Without dramatic increases in crop yields, vast new tracts of land—about the size of all tropical rain forests—will be required to feed these people. Many of these people want to eat meat, just like us. That will require even higher yields of grain to feed the cattle and chickens. Traditional high-yield techniques will not be able to meet that need. GM crops will.

Still, many chefs and foodies insist that indigenous, traditional forms of agriculture would serve China and India and Africa—or at least their environments—better. The idea may appeal to the postmodern hunger for authenticity, but as the Nobel laureate agronomist Norman Borlaug has noted, traditional farming practices are some of the most environmentally destructive. To wit: Subsistence truck farming makes for colorful ethnic tableaux, and for a devastating, very uncolorful loss of topsoil and minerals.

Koo Han Paik, last year's president of the San Francisco chapter of Slow Food, an organization dedicated to "preserving artisan foodstuffs" and promoting a more pleasurable way of life, recently summed up why chefs and their followers feel so strongly about GMOs: "A lot of this attitude comes from a kind of Marin County liberalism. You hear a lot about zero population growth, but not a lot about actually feeding people what they want to eat. It's almost as if the land is more important than the people. Listening to them, it's like people, I don't know, it's like people get in the way."

And there is the rub, no? Because—surprise!—the cuisine of trepidation is All About Me. It is about what it takes to make chefs and foodies feel superior to the uneducated masses. If that means weeping over an organic cherry, then they will weep over an organic cherry (and charge you $10 for doing so). If it means traveling to Belgium to find real organic chocolate, then they do just that (and bore you to death by telling you all about it on the menu). And if it means denying poor kids in India and Africa cheap and more nutritious GM rice—rice that might eventually prevent them from going blind—well, so be it. To paraphrase one of the nation's better chefs: The famine will always get them anyway. ●

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Click Here for Britney!

AOL is muscling its way into online journalism. Be afraid.

BY BRENDAN I. KOERNER

MAY 16, 2001 WAS A TYPICALLY eventful day in the never-ending news cycle. George W. Bush unveiled a controversial energy plan, ticking off environmentalists with his zeal for oil exploration. Louis Freeh prepped for his humiliating *mea culpa* before Congress as op-ed wags eviscerated the FBI's bungling of the Timothy McVeigh case. Abortion funding caused a stir on the House floor. Jenna Bush received a judicial wrist-slap for underage boozing.

Logging onto America Online, however, one might have surmised that May 16, 2001 was the most frivolous 24-hour stretch in recorded history. On AOL's welcome screen, the startup window that greets about 70 million different people each month, the headlines contained nary a mention of Arctic drilling or misplaced evidence. In the choicest, eye-level section of the screen, the top item instead screamed: "Give good vibes? Take the attitude quiz!" Below that was an equally earth-shattering tidbit: "See Mariah's makeover pic." Following that: "A fine romance? Find one with personals in New York."

In the top-right hand corner, just above the weather forecast, was a small box marked "Top News." Perhaps this was where an earnest member of AOL's journalistic stable—a *Time* reporter, a *Fortune* columnist—could offer a few quick, sober words regarding the Fed's rate cut, or the Middle East's turmoil. But during the evening's prime surfing hours, the Top News box was strangely empty—a light-blue void on a page otherwise cluttered with "Do you sing in the car?" polls, plugs for the latest J. Lo flick, and "Name that celebrity!" contests.

Such techno-glitches, which occur with disturbing frequency, have yet to hamper AOL's evolution into one of America's most popular news outlets. Every day, nine million people log onto the welcome screen. Compare that to the three million who peruse the daily *New York Times*. And at a time when network newscasts and major newspapers struggle to retain their audiences, AOL is enjoying spectacular growth; in the first quarter of 2001 alone, the service added 1.75 million new subscribers, giving it a total of 29 million. The next largest competitor, Microsoft's MSN, has signed up just five million.

AOL's trashy fare is no less crowd-pleasing than David Letterman's Top Ten Lists or the National Enquirer's "*Baywatch* Star Caught in Love Nest" stories. But neither late-night talk shows nor supermarket tabloids claim to be anything more than light entertainment, only barely tinged by current events. AOL, on the other hand, seems to consider itself a sober news organization. After all, this is the company that engineered last year's $350 billion merger with Time Warner, home to such serious journalism brands as CNN, *Time*, and *Fortune*. It has hired dozens of veteran reporters from the likes of the Associated Press and *The Washington Post* to work as online editors, charged with selecting which wire-service stories appear in AOL's news section. Those hires were designed to reflect CEO Gerald Levin's

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assurance that "journalism is going to be at the heart of this company." And when *Editor & Publisher Online* omitted AOL from a recent survey of journalism sites, Gary Kebbel, director of programming for the AOL News Channel, emailed a protest letter. He contended that many people use AOL as their online news source in lieu of the Web sites of their local newspapers.

No cut-and-dried figures can back up that claim, but anecdotal evidence supports Kebbel's vision of AOL as *USA Today Lite* for Netheads. About a quarter of AOL's usage stems from the viewing of content, from the Top News to dieting advice in the "Lifestyles" section. (The bulk of the remainder comes from email and chat.) And while some subscribers may disregard the notion of AOL as a journalistic outlet—much like those folks who buy *The New York Times* only for the crossword—there is little doubt that millions spend at least a few minutes each day perusing AOL's stories. And chances are, they're going to find it far easier to locate a tell-all about Christina Aguilera's vixen makeover than a serious article on Indonesia's embattled president—the former will likely be a blaring headline on the welcome screen, the latter will require four or five twists and turns through the site's less glamorous regions.

If AOL's version of news delivery is indicative of the future of online journalism, then the future looks mighty grim. No other legitimate news organization relies so heavily on celebrity-oriented drivel and trifling service pieces. Top headlines like "Doomed to be a spinster?" or "George Clooney: Hot or not?" make AOL seem like little more than an online amalgam of *Entertainment Weekly* and *The Montel Williams Show*. Even worse, the service has scant regard for the traditional divide that separates a newsrooms' editorial and business sides. Legitimate stories are seamlessly mixed in with advertorial fluff, and ethically murky sponsorship agreements call into question the entire operation's objectivity. The Internet, once envisioned as a promising venue for independent journalism, is becoming a digitized Wal-Mart circular under AOL's watch.

Shameless Product Plugs

Dating back to its earliest incarnation, as a gaming service called Control Video Corporation, AOL has fancied itself a populist enterprise unconcerned with geekdom's cyber-libertarian ideals. Though its chairman, the ubiquitous Steve Case, now rubs elbows with prime ministers at Davos, his business roots are decidedly humble—he once peddled sham poo for Procter & Gamble and pepperoni pies for Pizza Hut. Unlike other online pioneers, whose heads buzzed with radical concepts about techno-democracy and the reinvention of the public domain, Case rarely seemed to view the Internet as anything grander than a sales opportunity. It was no gaffe when Barry Schuler, AOL's president of interactive services, recently called himself the "guy who turned the Internet into Happy Meals." Only at AOL could such a statement be deemed a boast.

The paucity of meaningful content on AOL dates back to the company's scrappy origins, when it lacked the resources to obtain brand-name fare—financial analysis from CBS *Marketwatch*, or Hollywood gossip from *Entertainment Weekly*. Instead, the service relied on user-created content, particularly the salacious babble bandied about in the chat rooms. In 1996, *Rolling Stone* estimated that the company earned over $7 million per month from sex-oriented chat alone (a figure that Case, ever mindful of AOL's family-friendly image, vigorously disputed).

Yet content has become one of the company's most lucrative revenue sources. AOL, which once proudly touted a no-ad policy, earned $2.4 billion in advertising and commerce revenue in 2000, doubling its 1999 income. Most ads are viewed as users zip from the welcome screen to the companion "channels," adjoining sites that focus on sports, entertainment, or parenting. Those channels, in turn, steer users toward the e-commerce sites of AOL's sponsors, who shell out eight-figure sums for their privileged status. A marriage-trends "story" on the Women's Channel will inevitably lead to the TheKnot.com; a Family Channel piece that trumpets Mother's Day factoids will nudge users toward 1-800-flowers.com or Godiva.com.

The scheme wouldn't work without the welcome screen, the initial lure in AOL's bait-and-switch advertising strategy. During the mid-1990s, the screen's links tended toward the whimsical—"Toilet Paper: Do We Really NEED It?" or "Don't Look Up! Bird Droppings: What YOU Need to Know." This was before AOL began printing money with advertising revenue; in 1995, the struggling company raked in just $6 million from ads and e-commerce combined. In 1996, a Sony executive bribed AOL into giving his company welcome-screen ink by sending the engineering department a bushel of Walkmans.

Today, even 10,000 Walkmans couldn't buy that sort of placement. The welcome screen is the Internet's Manhattan, a high-rent district for the Gener-

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al Motors and eBays of the world. In exchange for their millions, deep-pocketed advertisers receive the finest in online buzz. Last fall, after Time Warner's *hot.dots* magazine began receiving a daily welcome-screen mention, hundreds of thousands of visitors began frequenting the publication's Web site—over a month before the inaugural issue. And when music retailer N2K plugged its fire sale on *Titanic* soundtracks, it sold over 750 CDs—in the first 20 minutes. Eat your heart out, Ron Popeil.

Not surprisingly, the welcome screen is now packed with in-house ads for AOL's floundering WB television network ("*Dawson's Creek:* They graduate tonight at 8 p.m.") or tacky come-ons for Martha Stewart-style baubles ("Make this summer bright! Glorious combinations of color and candlelight by Illumination").

AOL's welcome screen once tended toward the whimsical—"Don't Look Up! Bird Droppings: What YOU Need to Know."

"They used to divide the welcome screen into just three little blurbs," says David Cassel, editor of the *AOL Watch* newsletter and one of the company's most tenacious critics. "Now I see over a dozen links, plus a menu for over a dozen AOL areas. It's like a casino. They want to make it as hard as possible for you to wander off someplace else."

Since users cannot close the welcome screen as they surf, it is far more valuable to advertisers than the easily ignorable banners or pop-ups that most Web sites offer. And, of course, there is the sheer number of eyeballs at stake, over a quarter of them belong to "newbies" with less than one year's experience online, who are most apt to use e-commerce. "I sort of miss the bird-dropping content," sighs Cassel. "At least that was a bit edgy. Now it's mostly slick corporate propaganda for AOL Time Warner properties."

Mr. Stinky's Back!

The shameless hawking would not be so troubling were AOL more honest about its crassly commercial aims. This is, after all, the corporation that instructed Nora Ephron to change the title of her film from *You Have Mail* to *You've Got Mail*, the better to publicize its copyrighted catch phrase. But the postmerger AOL crows about its dedication to journalism, as if the welcome screen and its affiliated channels were some sort of digital rival to *The Washington Post*. To its credit, the service does feature all the top Reuters and Associated Press clippings, often with links to full-text speeches or a few paragraphs of instant analysis. When Vermont senator James Jeffords abandoned the Republicans, for example, the Top News box on the welcome screen did feature a one-click link to the AP story, as well as off-links to a menu of companion pieces on the GOP's miscues or the mood in Vermont. But these wire-service packages are often seamlessly combined with softer items that smack of sponsorship dollars. Right below a recent Reuters headline reading "U.S. Takes Action Against IRA," for example, AOL's programmers saw nothing wrong with placing a link to a story on Lyme Disease—a link which directed users to an insipid advertorial on MayoClinic.com. Nor did they have any qualms about turning a seemingly objective business feature, "Lower mortgage rates spur refinancing boom," into an off-link that whisked surfers away to Realtor.com. And the spotlight story under the "Technology" banner, a glowing report on Microsoft's Xbox gaming console, failed to mention AOL's considerable financial interest in the system; Warner Brothers has licensed several of its movies to Xbox developers.

There is also a surfeit of *Weekly World News*-like oddities among the news, including an array of Yeti-of-the-Month yarns in the "Watercooler" section. On one typical day, the Watercooler's top stories were "Monkey Man panic grows in New Delhi" and a tale of a giant flower known for its offensive odor. The latter item was the only news-oriented link to earn a hallowed welcome-screen mention, with a teaser that read: "Cover your nose! Mr. Stinky's back!"

Even in AOL's more serious quadrants, such as the national news page, the line between objective information and paid advertisements is blurry at best. One headline will lead into a standard wire-ser-

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vice story; another will direct a clicker to the for-profit Governmentguide.com, where visitors are peppered with sophomoric "fun facts" regarding the Bush administration. (Did you know that Colin Powell "enjoys fixing old Volvos"? Neither did *The Washington Monthly*.) After a while, ethics-conscious users begin to question anything and everything. Did AOL have a sponsor-related reason for giving such prominent play to "Hormones reduce cancer risk"? What about "Brad Pitt to launch clothing line"?

The shameless hawking would not be so troubling were AOL more honest about its crassly commercial aims.

Hard news without clear commerce tie-ins is treated like digital Brussels sprouts, a barely tolerable nutrient that's ritually shoved to the edge of the plate. Finding the latest scoop on AOL Time Warner recording artists like Lil' Kim or Kid Rock seldom requires more than a click or two—their pretty mugs frequently grace the welcome screen. Finding the latest scoop on California's energy crisis requires considerably more effort. "Half the work of journalism is making decisions about what matters, and cutting out the stuff that doesn't," says Mindy McAdams, the Knight Chair professor of journalism at the University of Florida. "When you go to a news source that you trust, you believe that they're going to give you the most important stuff in the least amount of time." On AOL, however, the most vital news is often buried beneath an avalanche of "Vanilla Ice—Still hot?" and "Monitor credit free—Be notified quarterly of inquiries to your file."

Not Just For Kids

The conventional wisdom holds that the typical AOL user is a teenybopper, far more interested in boy-band gossip than the Nasdaq. But statistics don't support the stereotype; in fact, 84 percent of AOL's members are over the age of 24, and the average age of an online user is 39. Though many AOLers may be heads of households with 12-year-old daughters, a recent *American Demographics* study found that these kids are not exactly Internet junkies; teens spend 30 percent less time online than adults. And, since they often lack credit cards, they are less likely to be swayed by e-commerce pitches.

AOL bristles at any suggestion that its content policies are less than journalistically sound. The company boasts of employing a hard-nosed staff of editors, including several veterans of America's most influential dailies. But for a company that clucks about its old-school credentials, AOL is surprisingly ornery with curious reporters. "They told us they have a news staff of about 40 people," says Larry Pryor, director of the online journalism program at the University of Southern California. "We tried to ascertain at one point the accuracy of that statement, and our reporter was physically thrown out of AOL by a security guard. They're extraordinarily defensive about their position on journalism because, I think, AOL fundamentally doesn't understand what journalism is."

The company keeps remarkably tight-lipped when asked about such allegations. *The Washington Monthly* spent over a month trying to coax an AOL executive—*any* AOL executive—into making an on-the-record defense of the service's approach to the welcome screen and its subsidiary content. Yet a flurry of polite phone calls and pleading emails (including several to AOL Time Warner editorial tsar Walter Isaacson) were either rebuffed or met with stony silence. In the end, the only official quote provided was a terse statement from corporate spokesman Nicholas Graham: "You can say AOL declined to participate. The executives here decided that this concerned something that was proprietary. ... I can't remember them ever granting an interview on this subject. If you can find a story out there about the welcome screen, I'd love to hear about it."

The company's top brass are not always so reluctant to talk. When Jonathan Sacks, AOL's senior vice president for interactive services, keynoted last year's online-journalism conference at USC, his comments scandalized the hundreds of ink-stained wretches in

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attendance. An ex-*Miami Herald* reporter with a graduate degree in journalism from the University of Iowa, Sacks stunned the crowd with his flipness. In between half-jokes about the public's distaste for long articles and the "threat" of free Internet access on college campuses ("a problem, we're working on it"), he outlined his commerce-centric vision for "interactive journalism."

"In the interactive space, a *New York Times* book review is more valid in a way, is more useful in a way, when there's a link at the bottom of the screen that takes you to a place that you can buy a book," said Sacks, seemingly unaware of the ruckus that has surrounded the *Times*'s electronic partnership with Barnes & Noble. "That's really what the promise of interactive journalism is about. It's an integrative experience ... We are likely to integrate commerce opportunities." He topped off his sermon with a chilling declaration: "First and foremost, we think people want convenience. Convenience is king in the interactive space."

"The basic thing I walked away from there was that a story was only as valuable as the button you could put at the bottom, where you could sell something related to it," says Ken Layne, founder of the now-defunct journalism site Tabloid.net. "Just at my table, the people were whispering darkly to each other, whispering things like, 'What about a famine? What's the link for that? What about a race riot? What's the link for that?'" In a critique of Sacks's speech for the *Online Journalism Review*, Layne wryly noted that ads for 1-800-flowers.com would be a perfect match for plane-crash stories.

But such dilemmas are of scant concern to AOL's programmers; they are paid to appease advertisers and generate traffic, not wrestle with journalistic quandaries. As a result, ethical missteps are becoming more frequent. In March, for example, *The Wall Street Journal* reported that AOL irked People.com by asking the site to edit out an offending line ("He may not be Oscar material") from a Keanu Reeves profile; AOL was planning a live chat with the *Matrix* star, and didn't wish to offend. People.com refused, so AOL didn't link to the story.

AOL claims the requesting employee acted alone and was reprimanded for his transgression. If that is indeed the case, then the company's executives deserve equal censure for dismantling the "Chinese wall" that theoretically separates business and editorial interests. When the *Los Angeles Times* agreed to split some advertising revenue with the local arena, the Staples Center, there was a newsroom revolt; at AOL, such behavior hardly causes an eye to bat. AOL receives a kickback each time a user opens an account with either DLJ or E*Trade, two online brokers who advertise on the service. "If you're DLJ or E*Trade," AOL ad sales guru Meyer Berlow once bragged to *Fortune*, "you're going to pay me on every single trade, forever." That vested interest in the financial well-being of advertisers destroys any semblance of AOL's journalistic credibility.

"The really scary thing," says Layne, "is that a year after [his speech], Sacks won. AOL's earnings are fine, the Time Warner collaboration seems to be going a lot better than a lot of the analysts said. And most of the independent content sites are out of business." Indeed, as the *Salons* of the Web struggle to remain afloat, AOL keeps marching along. According to Jupiter Communications, AOL Time Warner properties accounted for nearly one-third of all time spent on the Internet this past January. Steve Case is projecting $40 billion in revenue for 2001, an astronomical figure that AOL hopes to achieve via "cross-media opportunities"—massive ad packages that will grant clients visibility throughout the AOL Time Warner empire, from the welcome screen to CNN to *InStyle*.

Journalism by the Numbers

For the moment, an Internet user can still elude AOL's ad-garbled content by signing up with a rival ISP. But the moment may be brief. The coming migration from dial-up to broadband will be a boon to AOL, which now controls around 20 percent of the nation's cable lines. The current FCC chairman, laissez-faire devotee Michael K. Powell, seems unlikely to force AOL to share that pipe with competitors; he suggested as much this past February, when he opined that "openness is not always a good thing." Independent service providers will fold or be gobbled up, and the welcome screen will become an omnipresent fact of life for Time Warner cable customers. Don't like it? Well, then enjoy your slow-as-molasses 56k-dial-up modem.

Nor will AOL's future reach be strictly limited to computer owners. The company is diving headlong into interactive television with AOLTV, a $250 set-top box intended to rival TiVo and Microsoft's WebTV. AOL's cable holdings give its device a competitive edge, since it could be configured to provide special services to existing Time Warner customers. Then, of course, there is the matter of AOL's marketing clout. With free access to the nation's most-read magazines and most-watched cable networks,

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the company can engineer the sort of publicity campaign that small-fry TiVo can only dream about.

Conscious of the cries of "Monopoly!", Case has been careful to emphasize that AOL is committed to serving the public interest. "Of course we want to make our numbers, and we will make our numbers," he told a conference crowd this past May, referring to his lofty revenue goals. "But we also want to make a difference." Promising words. But Case conveniently neglected to define what AOL means by "public interest," a trite and hazy phrase that is nowadays used to justify everything from the death penalty to mega-mergers.

Chances are, of course, that AOL's definition of the public interest doesn't quite jibe with that of consumer advocates. During the FCC's merger-review process, AOL and Time Warner filed a joint statement attesting to the public benefits of their impending union. Quoting liberally from cheerful reports by Goldman Sachs (titled "Perfect *Time*ing") and Merrill Lynch ("You've Got Upside!"), the lengthy memo gushed about the new company's ability to speed the dissemination of information technology. "This merger is not just about putting different forms of media together," the document quoted Case as saying. "It is about something new and powerful—a truly mass-market, interactive company providing service on a global level that will become even more central to people's lives."

Yet nowhere does this public-interest filing mention AOL Time Warner's commitment to providing objective information—or, as McAdams puts it, understanding "that there is a big difference between a consumer and a citizen." Lost amid all the hubbub about "the spectrum of new consumer offerings" and "boundless possibilities for new consumer services" was any discussion of AOL's attitude toward its role as the nation's foremost media gatekeeper. Will the company provide unbiased coverage of its own financial interests? Is it committed to a clear separation between editorial and advertorial content? Can a balance be struck between the vital ("House keeps Bush abortion aid ban") and the trivial ("Ted Danson: No more Mr. Nice Guy")? The memo addressed none of these concerns.

But Sacks did, if only for an instant, in his infamous USC address. "We're the biggest guys," he said. "We're big, and we're bad." The hyperbole was meant to elicit laughter among the crowd's idealists, to poke good-natured fun at their cantankerous commitment to the Internet's democratic, even anarchistic potential. But the jest elicited only dread; the truth can do that. ●

The Washington Monthly Journalism Award

JUNE 2001

TOM KNUDSON

"Fat of the Land: Movement's Prosperity Comes at a High Price"

Sacramento Bee

In a five-part series, Tom Knudson shows how the environmental movement has gone astray since its Thoreauvian beginnings. Executives at environmental organizations are being paid six-figure salaries to meet in luxurious settings, where they discuss increasingly ineffective and ill-conceived objectives. The series reports that new money flowing into conservation is not helping to create a healthier planet, but rather funding the metastasis of conservationist bureaucracy and fundraising.

THE MONTHLY JOURNALISM AWARD is presented each month to one or more newspaper, magazine, radio, or television stories (or series of stories) that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence or solution of public problems. Please send nominations (including a copy of the article or broadcast text) to The Washington Monthly Journalism Award, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20005. Or e-mail us at **editors@washingtonmonthly.com**. Nominations for stories run in June & July are due August 1, 2001.

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Dick Cheney's Dick Cheney

Meet OMB Director Mitch Daniels: The most powerful man in the Bush administration you've never heard of.

BY NICHOLAS THOMPSON

WHEN GEORGE W. BUSH SIGNED his $1.3 trillion tax cut into law, he thanked three people first: "Mr. Vice President, Secretary O'Neill, and Director Daniels." Mr. Vice President? Yup. We all know Cheney. Secretary O'Neill? Sure. That silver-haired guy who used to run the aluminum company. Director Daniels? Hmmm ...

Most people don't know Mitch Daniels, director of the Office of Management and Budget, but they should. The OMB chief has the most critical but unheralded job in government. He gets to stick his fingers in almost every federal pie, and Daniels has accumulated remarkable power since his swearing in. He has developed a close relationship with the president and inspired confidence among those around him. In fact, he has been deeply connected with all the decisions that have defined the Bush administration so far. He helped design and defend the Bush tax cut; he was the main architect of Bush's budget; he presides over decisions on which Clinton-era regulations stay and which ones go.

But that isn't surprising. Over the last two decades, the main battles in Washington have been fought over the size and scope of government, with the OMB director commanding the presidential battalions. Ronald Reagan will be forever known for David Stockman's slicing of the government and famous admission that the president's tax cuts were a "Trojan Horse" for helping the rich. Richard Darman, perhaps George H. W. Bush's most influential domestic adviser, is credited with—or blamed for—Bush's tax increases. Budget hawks Leon Panetta and Alice Rivlin helped keep Clinton fiscally in line early on. The more liberal Jack Lew expanded spending toward the end of Clinton's term.

Fittingly enough, given the intensity of the struggles over spending, all of these directors, including Daniels, have worked out of an office originally designed in 1883 for the secretary of war. But if he's at war, Daniels is a canny fighter who knows one can best administer the stiletto while in an embrace—a vastly different philosophy from that held by the churlish Republican congressional leaders like Tom DeLay and Trent Lott. Daniels, in fact, bears an uncanny resemblance to Dick Cheney. He's calm, unassuming, likable, self-deprecating, and very smart. Like Cheney, Daniels won the trust of the president through his loyalty, command of the issues, and dry wit. Like Cheney, Daniels is deeply conservative with a moderate demeanor. Like Cheney, Daniels is a major reason that the Bush administration has had success pushing its agenda through, despite the president's failure to win the popular vote. In his *New Yorker* profile of Cheney, Nicholas Lemann likened him to a serotonin uptake inhibitor. Daniels also has that same calming effect on those around him—an appropriate skill for a man who made a fortune at the company that produces Prozac.

Daniels' similarity to the highly competent Cheney

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doesn't bode well for liberals. Since George W. Bush announced his candidacy and the entire Republican establishment and its wealth started migrating toward Austin, the scariest thought for his opponents has not been that a Bush administration would push conservative policies, but that it would do so with consummate skill. Regardless of Bush's own personal abilities, talent has accumulated around him: from his early advisers to his campaign team to the merciless lawyers who prevailed in Florida to the successful CEOs who now run the government. These people know how to win.

True enough, the administration has stumbled a number of times recently, and there's evidence of liabilities created by the arrogant moral certitude of its corporate ethos. Jim Jeffords blindsided the party because the White House failed to realize what its sharp elbows and juggernaut conservative agenda felt like to moderates; blocking increased arsenic safety standards in drinking water suggested a blindness to the worries of average Americans. Still, the administration has done vastly better than anyone could have expected given the chief executive's inexperience and the circumstances of his election. In fact, if two things have become clear about Bush since he stood in the rain and took the oath of office, they're that his administration will be deeply conservative and damn effective. He has assembled the most formidable conservative team since Ronald Reagan's first term. And Mitch Daniels is one of its best players. We should all get to know him better.

Hurricane Mitch

On the day Bush signed the tax cut into law, Daniels was darting around frenetically—from the White House to Capitol Hill to his office to a co-worker's baby shower—before finally settling down for an interview. His small frame and perpetual motion brought to mind a bureaucratic Allen Iverson with a receding hairline.

Daniels speaks with a strong Midwestern twang and uses phrases like "I don't reckon." He works out of the cavernous former war room which he has sparsely decorated with pictures of his four daughters, a portrait of Eisenhower, and a landscape from the National Gallery that Daniels picked out online because he didn't have time to go there in person. Conspicuously absent are the usual Washington vanity photos. The only hint of Daniels' power is a picture squirreled away in the corner of Bush signing Daniels' OMB appointment. But the image doesn't even show the president's face—just his hand and the pen.

Daniels comes from Indiana, a deeply conservative state that still has Midwestern sensibilities. The Hoosier state always supports GOP candidates for president, but it is dominated by laid-back Republicans, not the reflexive Washington-haters who make up so much of the party's base. It's even possible for moderate Democrats, like Sen. Evan Bayh, to win elections there. The apotheosis of Indiana Republicanism is Sen. Dick Lugar: strongly conservative and entirely likable.

The culture that produced Lugar also produced Daniels, and appropriately enough, Lugar gave Daniels his start, hiring the young Princeton graduate as an aide in 1971. Daniels got to work quickly—one of his first tasks was undigging a pothole so that Lugar, then mayor of Indianapolis, could be photographed filling it back up. Then, when Lugar was elected to the Senate in 1976, Daniels went with him. Daniels eventually became chief of staff and earned the reputation as the senator's alter ego.

In 1983, Daniels left Lugar to run the Republican Party's senatorial campaign committee. Two years later, the Reagan White House snatched him away and made him the president's political director. Chaos reigned in Reagan's second-term White House, and Daniels' main job was damage control every time a colleague did something like announce that we were at war with Honduras or let the press know that Nancy Reagan's astrologer set the president's schedule.

A crafty inside player, Daniels stayed out of trouble and ultimately left after sparring with Chief of Staff Donald Regan, arguing that Regan should be more forthcoming on Iran-Contra. According to Jack Svahn, a domestic political adviser at the time: "Mitch was an unknown to most of us there. But he surrounded himself with good people and worked quietly and methodically. He knew enough to stay out of the way of the bullets, and there were a lot of bullets flying around then."

After leaving the White House in 1987, Daniels was hired as president of the Hudson Institute, a conservative think tank back in his hometown of Indianapolis that had fallen on hard times after the death of its founder, a quirky iconoclast named Herman Kahn. Daniels served three years and now receives credit for helping turn the institute around financially—even if current members are hard pressed to name its intellectual accomplishments in the Daniels era. Hudson takes a traditionally free-market approach, arguing against government intervention in the economy. But the institute isn't necessarily for hardliners; Marshall Wittmann, now the most-quoted man in Washington and a strong supporter of

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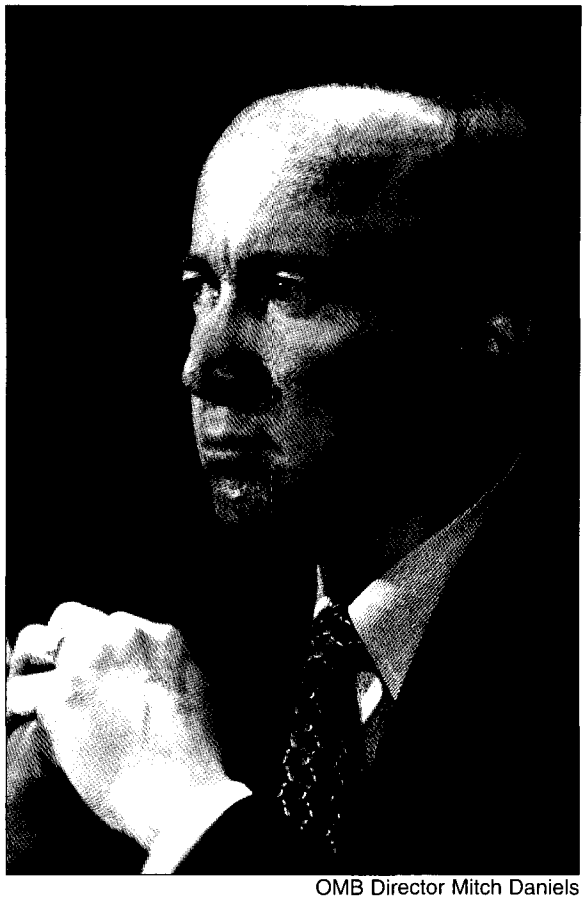
John McCain, is probably its most famous fellow.

After leaving Hudson, Daniels moved over to the pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly, the largest company in Indiana. Daniels started in government relations, advanced to direct North American operations, and then moved further upstairs to direct strategic planning. While there he earned a reputation for tight, efficient control, eliminating offices for example and making everyone, including himself, work out of cubicles.

It was hard to work in a pharmaceutical company's upper management in the '90s without dirtying one's hands a little. Lilly, for example, saved money for years by testing their drugs on subjects off the Indianapolis streets, many with substance abuse problems desperate for Lilly's cash, according to a 1996 *Wall Street Journal* report. Daniels didn't start the practice but he surely knew about it. The company also helped lead the industry's siege of Capitol Hill, morphing into a massively powerful interest group and getting government to serve the industry's interests and not necessarily the public's: rewriting legislation to accelerate the FDA's drug approval process, extending patent terms, and stifling generic-drug makers.

But Daniels seems to have remained above the fray, saying that he's "pretty near virginal" when it comes to lobbying—a believable claim since he stayed in Indiana and never registered as a lobbyist. The only controversy that snared him was a dogfight between Lilly and the Church of Scientology, which objected violently to Prozac, Lilly's best-selling drug. The Church ran a brutal campaign to destroy the drug's reputation. Daniels pulled no punches fighting back, arguing that crass financial motives drove the Church. He told *USA Today*, "Any vulnerable patient saved by psychiatry or therapy of any kind is one less potential victim for them."



OMB Director Mitch Daniels

Lilly and Daniels won their battle—and they should have. Increasingly, the evidence shows that Lilly was right about Prozac's safety and the drug has helped millions overcome depression. After a significant dip during the company's Scientology scrap, Lilly rebounded, and Daniels helped give it one of the country's 10 best profit margins. Daniels certainly feels proud of what he accomplished. "Those aren't ball bearings we were making out there," says Daniels—but then, always one with quick political instincts, he adds "as valuable as ball bearings are."

That's What Friends Are For

Daniels came to W.'s attention through Al Hubbard, an Indiana businessman and Harvard Business School classmate who had coordinated the campaign trips to Austin of Bush's suitors and tutors. Daniels was also friends with George Bush the elder, an Eli Lilly board member in the late '70s.

After Hubbard threw Daniels' hat into the ring, Cheney and White House chief of staff Andrew Card immediately supported him. Both had known Daniels during the Reagan administration, and both also knew the importance of getting an ally at OMB. Cheney even slotted his former defense department comptroller, Sean O'Keefe, as Daniels' deputy.

Still, the choice of Daniels surprised many people. Yes, he had White House experience, but he had never worked on government budgets. Sure, he knew how to make money, but did he know the reasons for the floundering of the Office of Personnel Management's "Automated Processing System" for federal retirement benefits? Did he know whether the Army Corps of Engineers' computers were secure?

When Daniels was appointed, Washington insiders murmured that he got the job because Bush just wanted a low-profile loyalist. Such speculation

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increased significantly when the White House transition team didn't hold a press conference to announce the appointment. Many Republicans still blame Bush senior's hugely influential OMB director, Richard Darman, for losing the 1992 election by persuading the president to cut spending and raise taxes—helping move the country onto a sound financial track but forcing Bush to repudiate his "read-my-lips" pledge.

Daniels, the thinking went, was more loyal than bold. He had contributed exclusively to Republican candidates, worked for a company that gives about 90 percent of its donations to Republicans, held major fundraisers for W.'s father, and been quoted in the press frequently over the past decade making the requisite pro-Republican and anti-Washington quips. When the Democrats controlled Congress, Daniels once said, "If Congress were a corporation, it would have been taken over in a leveraged buyout." In early 1994, he chided critics concerned about rising health-care costs and the number of the uninsured Americans by telling *The Washington Post*: "Markets do self-correct, and this one is well into the process. As usual the politicians are several miles behind the market."

Daniels clearly has the right attitude for the current White House team, particularly since he has also made heaps of money while retaining an appreciation for the jocular male Budweiser-and-baseball camaraderie that Bush so enjoys. Like the president, Daniels finished off quite a few six-packs in his youth and loves sports. When asked about the difference between Indianapolis and Washington, he responded, "The football team's not as good here."

Most important of all, Daniels fits into this administration because he is as tightfisted as they come. He ruthlessly cut budgets at both Hudson and Eli Lilly, and he tried to get the Rolling Stones' "You Can't Always Get What You Want" played for people put on hold by OMB's phone system. Herb London, the current president of the Hudson Institute, calls Daniels "viscerally parsimonious." Daniels told *Time* magazine that as a young man he once plucked quarters out of a toilet bowl to pay for a pitcher of beer. Today, he still hunts down every single golf ball that he swats into the woods. "I saw in the paper that he was worth something like $38 million," says Al Hubbard. "I guarantee his wife was the most surprised person in the world when she read that. She probably thought he wasn't worth 38 dollars."

All Along The Watchtower

Directing OMB should be a penny-pincher's dream. Most of the government is set up to reward people who can wrangle more money for their district, their agency, or their program. But the Office of Management and Budget serves as the federal government's curmudgeonly accountant. It doles out money, reins in programs, and ensures that the parks stay open even as administrations turn over.

Daniels immediately put his parsimonious instincts to work writing the budget: coordinating the 20 or so political appointees working out of the White House with OMB's roughly 500 career civil servants, and attempting to evaluate whether every single federal program deserved more money or less. Traditionally, the process resembles a combination of cat-herding and Sumo wrestling, with every agency resisting cuts, often by nasty means, and trying to circumvent them. But Bush's budget-approval process was remarkably orderly, even with the brutally short timetable forced by the Florida mess.

First, Daniels met personally with every cabinet member to discuss perceived needs. Then Bush and his top economic advisers decided to set an overall target of a 4-percent nominal spending increase, a significant drop from Clinton's last years, with an extra, exempted, fudge factor—like Stockman's famous magic asterisk—for likely increases in military spending. Daniels notes that he offered Bush the option of actually freezing government spending, a drastic step given inflation, population growth, and the fact that even a 4-percent increase created the lowest federal spending level as a percentage of GDP since the '60s.

Next, Paul O'Neill, Cheney, Card, Daniels, and Larry Lindsey, Bush's top economic adviser, huddled together in the West Wing, writing the budget, listening to agencies' complaints, and finally reaching compromise. Daniels and the board were so persuasive that no cabinet secretary complained to the president, standard operating procedure in years past. Under Clinton, agencies routinely resorted to White House back channels to win larger budget increases, such as getting a senior aide to drop the president a line during a midnight game of hearts. Describing the process this year, Daniels says: "The District Court took care of almost everything. The Appellate Court heard a few, and the Supreme Court was never appealed to."

Daniels and company were also remarkably effective when it came to the tax cut, which Daniels played key roles in drafting and presenting. He spun print reporters and appeared on talk shows, calmly describing why a $1.6 trillion tax cut was eminently affordable.

He also earned rave reviews for his performance

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on Capitol Hill. He arrived at his first hearing with the budget committee's ranking Democrat, Kent Conrad, armed with an apple pie, Conrad's favorite. The pie was cut up in sections to depict how Bush planned to divvy up the surplus, one labeled "tax cut" with the phrase "don't touch me." Daniels also mastered the details and didn't just spin from notes. When Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W. Va.) lectured him on King Charles I of England's arrogance, Daniels responded by zinging back another line about Charles I, charming the stentorian senator. Daniels also never wavered. When asked later whether it ever crossed his mind that, given the uncertainty of the projected surpluses, $1.6 trillion might prove extravagant, he coolly responded: "I think it was appropriate for now. It might prove to have been too little."

With Daniels' help and unswerving commitment, the Bush administration needed only four months to pass its most important proposal. True, giving away money isn't the hardest task in politics, but compared with Clinton's initial top priority—his self-immolating health-care plan—the Bush team did a remarkable job. Moreover, in the process of crafting the budget and selling the tax cut, Daniels has placated his early critics. William Niskanen, chairman of the Cato Institute, tore into Daniels when the appointment was announced, telling *The Chicago Tribune* that Daniels was a "political gofer" in the Reagan administration who worked as "an errand boy." Now, Niskanen has changed his tune. "He's done very well to my surprise," he says. "He's clearly got the trust of the president and he and Cheney seem to be doing everything together. That's a very good sign that the administration respects him."

Power To The People

Daniels' portfolio extends well beyond the budget. As OMB director, he is also charged with managing, or at least consulting on, all government programs. OMB should know that the State Department lags so far behind current technology that many embassies don't have email; it should also know why the Department of Agriculture recently paid $97 million for a car and $11 million for a microscope.

Management has always been OMB's neglected stepchild, and Daniels has not shown that he'll change that. He has stated that his top priority will be expanding the Clinton administration's focus on evaluating programs based on how well they meet specific goals and targets. That's a noble goal—even if there's great potential for partisan misuse. But Daniels hasn't even nominated a deputy director for management yet and its unclear how much further he will be able to go than Clinton's ambitious team.

Mitch Daniels is Newt Gingrich with charm and Dan Quayle with brains.

The real action under Daniels seems likely to come from OMB's ability to evaluate significant agency regulations. With certain exceptions, a cabinet member who wants to do research on a potentially important new rule (for example, setting haze limits for national parks) has to go to OMB's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) for permission. After formulating the rule, the agency must then submit it back to OIRA for review. OIRA isn't the ultimate authority. It can't completely overrule a congressional order, for example, but "it can always keep whatever it wants holed up in the Khyber Pass for a long long time," says Bob Knisely, deputy director for regulatory review under Clinton's national performance review.

The model for Daniels' approach to regulatory review so far seems to be Dan Quayle's Council on Competitiveness—an anti-regulatory SWAT team created because, as Quayle wrote at the time, "faceless bureaucrats" were conspiring to "strangle the free market with red tape." In the latter half of the first Bush administration, if a company wanted a regulation changed and was stifled by OSHA, the FDA, or Congress, it could take its cause directly to the council.

Daniels comes from that world, even if he has more subtlety than Quayle. Al Hubbard, Daniels' patron, was the council's original chair before he had to leave after coming under criticism for making rulings that favored companies in which he held stock. Hubbard was replaced by David McIntosh, another old friend of Daniels', whom Bush at one point considered for the OMB director's job.

Daniels was even connected directly to the council while at Lilly, and his lobbying shop helped get the council to work to accelerate the FDA's drug approval process—bringing life-saving drugs to market quickly, along with a few life-ending ones, such as the dia-

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betes drug Rezulin. The council, later aided by Newt Gingrich's Congress, also put tight restrictions on how the FDA can spend industry-paid user fees. Subsequently, by the mid '90s, Eli Lilly had a larger budget for promoting Prozac than the FDA had for monitoring adverse reactions in approved drugs, one of this country's 10 leading causes of death. In addition, when Daniels was in charge of government relations, Eli Lilly helped convince Quayle to weaken emergency pollution standards for major companies—circumventing an EPA ruling that threatened one Lilly plant. Daniels has claimed that he did not directly lobby at all, but in 1991, he did tell *The Boston Globe* that council members had called Eli Lilly executives to "try out some of their ideas on us."

Under Daniels' leadership, OMB has already moved in the direction of Quayle's council. In 1992, for example, Quayle and his council convinced George H. W. Bush to issue a moratorium on new regulations. Immediately upon coming to office, George W. Bush and Daniels' OMB allowed agencies to hold up pending Clinton-era regulations. OMB and the White House then started rolling a good number of them back, eventually charting a more open course only after burning its fingers on its proposed overturning of arsenic regulations. According to Gary Bass, director of the liberal OMB Watch, the Council on Competitiveness differs only in that Daniels' OMB team: "is much more polished. But they seem likely to make equivalent if not greater rollbacks of public protections."

Perhaps even more prominently, Daniels has picked John Graham as head of OIRA. A well-respected, Harvard-affiliated academic, Graham has served as a lightning rod during his confirmation hearings because of his previous work highly favorable to corporations. Graham, for example, has argued for years that many environmental regulations are counterproductive. Graham also infuriated consumer advocates with the disclosure of a letter he wrote to Philip Morris while at Harvard requesting (successfully) $25,000 for his center for risk analysis, noting that "currently we have major projects underway in carcinogen classification, risk assessment, public health priorities, and the use (and misuse) of risk numbers in environmental legislation."

Most controversially, Graham vigorously supports sweeping application of cost-benefit analysis, a tool that, used well and with humility, could be a powerful force for government efficiency. But cost-benefit calculations can be cruel. OIRA will soon have to evaluate whether pollution restrictions should be tightened to reduce smog in national parks. Measuring the costs to industry is easy, but how will OIRA gauge the benefits? What's a scenic vista worth? What's the value of keeping someone healthy and

Daniels with Sen. Kent Conrad.

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prolonging his or her life a little bit? There's no easy answer, and General Motors has vastly better access to the White House, and Graham, than the Appalachian Mountain Club.

As with almost everything in Daniels' toolbox, cost-benefit analysis could be a major asset for making government work if used transparently and nonpartisanly. Unfortunately, however, transparency and nonpartisanship haven't been the dominant traits of this administration, or Daniels, so far.

Mitch The Knife

On the day he started working in the former war room, Daniels began a quest to pass Bush's massive tax cut. Along the way, he used almost every trick in the book. The biggest likely spending increase, military appropriations, was never disclosed; the tax cuts were designed to kick in down the road, minimizing political damage to this administration; the tax cuts were even budgeted to phase out in 2010, decreasing their short-term cost but creating a crazy quilt of incentives. For example, the estate tax will be fully repealed for only one year under current rules, vanishing in 2010 only to reappear in 2011. The message: If you've got heirs, 2010 is the year to die.

Daniels' budget also sets spending levels nearly as low as politically possible, given the current surplus. To his credit, Daniels' budget has targeted corporate pork, like ship-building subsidies, that his Republican predecessors considered untouchable. But the budget also cuts funding for agencies popular with the public, like the EPA, and even goes after programs that Bush himself says he likes. Bush donated part of the advance he earned on his biography to the Boys and Girls Clubs, saying that he "believe[s] so strongly in helping children understand that somebody loves them." Page 673 of the budget Daniels wrote zeroes out government funding earmarked for the organization.

Most important, Daniels has tossed out a grenade with its pin pulled that will likely detonate when future administrations write their budgets—about the time the baby-boomers retire and create a whole host of fiscal problems. After the tax cut, even assuming that the administration's optimistic surpluses come to fruition, there simply won't be much money left over. The budget contains an approximately $900 billion "contingency fund" to pay for all additional future programs over 10 years, a deeply troubling sum given that Bush's promised prescription-drug benefit could cost more than a trillion dollars and that missile-defense systems can't be bought in Filenes' Basement. And forget about any money left for shoring up Social Security and Medicare—two of Bush's most oft-repeated campaign promises—without likely moving into significant deficit spending. (For more on Bush's budget, see Walter Shapiro's "Duped by Dubya" on p. 49.)

Don't Mean A Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing

When the president announced the tax cut, he said, "There's a new philosophy in town now." That's certainly true, and Daniels is certainly one of its main implementers. But that new philosophy seems mainly to guarantee that, unlike all the previous conservative retrenchments, this one will be done with style. Newt Gingrich and his band of warriors made it seem as if they wanted to slash programs for the poor because, well, the poor needed to be kicked around a bit. Daniels says that he wants to reduce government spending because it genuinely helps the disadvantaged. When asked what drew him to the Bush administration, he thought for a minute and then said: "his emphasis on social justice and his new ways of achieving it. ... The idea of trying to demonstrate that principles that we casually refer to as conservative not only work, but work better for the least advantaged among us."

Daniels says this with a sincerity that is convincing—until you remember that the real point of his budget strategy is to put government on a long-term starvation diet. In a way, Daniels is Newt Gingrich with charm, and thus the ideal employee for the Bush administration: smart, loyal, and committed to his party's long-frustrated and deeply conservative agenda.

When I asked Daniels whether he ever disagreed with the president's policies, Daniels smiled and said of course he did. But then he added that whenever someone on his staff takes issue with the administration: "I always give the same speech around here." He held his thumb and forefinger together to make a zero, "We all got the same number of votes for president."

That's a doubly important point. George W. Bush is trying to ram his agenda through as though he won an overwhelming majority of the vote. That strategy has begun to catch up with him, and his popularity levels have dropped. But to the extent that he has succeeded so far, it's not because he has a mandate from the American public. It's because the people working for him are awfully good. ●

Research assistance by Tory Newmyer and Jason Zalinger.

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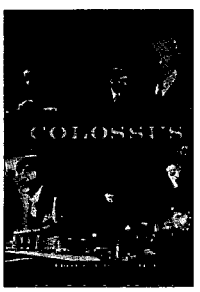
Is the Corporation Obsolete?

Corporate irresponsibility? Predatory behavior? Blame the charter—and rewrite it.

By Jonathan Rowe

It is a sign of immersion that the thing immersed doesn't notice. The fish, famously, is not aware of water. Dick Cheney and George W. Bush cannot see past their allegiance to the oil industry because it's all they know—their water.

So it is with the corporation. Over the last century and a half, the corporation has become the dominant institution of American life, the "envelope of existence," as one writer put it. It defines work, entertainment, politics, transportation, the way people think about their bodies and the world. Increasingly it dominates the cognitive environment of daily life. For all the kvetching about government, the corporation permeates our lives in much more basic ways.



COLOSSUS:
How the Corporation Changed America
Ed. Jack Beatty
Bantam Doubleday, $30.00

Yet the more pervasive the corporation becomes, the less we seem to notice. It's just the way things are, the new normal, and rapidly it is becoming the norm for the entire world. This has been the subtext of recent trade agreements, and the implicit agenda that has inspired the opposition to the World Trade Organization. Protestors in Seattle and elsewhere have not been opposing trade per se. One might as well oppose the morning. The issue rather is who controls this trade, under what terms and to what ends.

As it has evolved over the last 150 years, the American corporation is more than just a mode of business. It is an agenda, the organizing principle for an entire society—the embedding in the institutional matrix of the single-minded quest for monetary gain. Apologists may protest to larger aims, or at least effects. But the soul of the corporation is the charter, and corporate charters speak for themselves. They say that the company exists to make money and for no other reason. The question today is whether that governing concern is large enough to serve as organizing principle for the entire world.

The question may seem eccentric, even naïve, in these economically triumphant times. Yet back in the days when the corporation was still new and its impact clear, the question was of obsessive concern. President Lincoln expressed this in a 19th-century version of Eisenhower's military-industrial complex speech. "Corporations have been enthroned," Lincoln said. "An era of corruption in high places will follow … until wealth is aggregated in a few hands … and the Republic is destroyed."

Lincoln knew a thing or two about threats to the Republic. The question continued as farmer-populists and Progressives led the drive for regulations and restraints. Presidents Theodore Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson all called for federal chartering of large corporations, as Madison, with unusual foresight, had urged at the Constitutional Convention. Roosevelt even created a Federal Bureau of Corporations because of these concerns.

But soon enough the corporate economy became simply "the economy" in the majestic singular. It was helped greatly by a fledgling advertising industry, which cast it in friendly and even patriotic terms, and by an

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economics profession which served as apologist and booster. Most important of all, prosperity had a quieting effect—the sedation of Huxley's *Brave New World* as opposed to the statist oppression of Orwell's *1984*. The 1990s were such a time, of course. But as regularly happens, the wheel is turning once again. The stock market is no longer a money machine for the masses, and the jazzy new technology—the microchip—is becoming a bit old hat.

The energy situation, moreover, has brought dirty old industries such as oil and coal back to center stage. After Clinton's off-and-on embraces, the Bush administration has seized the role of Monica to the suits. At the same time, corporations are showing a degree of raw aggression that is unsettling to say the least. They are claiming new territory in virtually every dimension of existence, from the personal space that is assaulted by huckstering and cell phones to the Star Wars initiative which will stake a commercial claim to the furthest reaches of outer space. They are taking control of the quest for knowledge at universities, and are moving even to claim the gene pool and the processes of life itself.

Perhaps this helps explain why the looming invasion of oil companies into the nation's parks and wilderness areas has become so symbolically charged. It captures in a single image what is happening already in American life. Put all this together, and it is not surprising that there are efforts to revive the debate that was aborted a century ago and to inquire into the nature of the institution that the United States is seeking to launch into a global role. The issue here is not the market economy or the free enterprise system, though journalists inevitably will cast it that way. Rather, it is the institutional machinery the government has created to dominate that system.

A New Deal

One sign of the renewed debate is the recent book by Jack Beatty, called *Colossus: How the Corporation Changed America*. After a decade or more of how-to-make-a-million books, it is significant that someone of Beatty's stature has stepped back and attempted to put the corporation into a broader social and economic frame. Beatty is an editor at the *Atlantic*, and his work shows the best voice of that magazine—temperate, fair-minded, but with a strong ethical compass. Through anthology and essay, Beatty argues that a disposition toward worldly lucre runs deep in the United States. It took root here with the Puritan settlers and found ultimate expression in the modern corporation.

In the contest between God and Mammon, it wasn't even close. Yet as the vehicle for these pecuniary urgings, the corporation posed a big dilemma. On the one hand, it became a prodigious engine of "prosperity" as conventionally defined. Yet it also represented a concentration of power beyond anything the Founders envisioned—and power was the very thing they strove mightily to subdue. It was their demon, the thing they found "ultimately corrupting," as historian Bernard Bailyn put it.

Yet here it was, the thing Madison and the others dreaded most, arisen through the cracks in their own system and bearing gifts that the populace could not resist. The result was a bipolar national psyche, which Beatty illustrates through a host of contemporary accounts, from John D. Rockefeller's ruthless empire-building to the repercussions of the more recent leveraged buy-out craze. Beatty's answer is the one John Kenneth Galbraith formulated in the '50s: countervailing power. The centralized economic power of the corporation requires institutional counterweights in the form of a strong federal government, as well as labor unions and organized citizen groups.

Countervailing power is a brooding Madisonian concept that extends the constitutional principle of checks and balances to the unanticipated gap in the design. (Decades ago, a young Ralph Nader took the idea to heart.) As Beatty says, it is the missing element in debates over the global economy. Competition for global market share will not ensure that other needs are met; in fact, it practically ensures that they won't. If corporations are going to have free rein on a global level, then there must be a counter balance—a "New Deal for the global economy"—to protect the environment, establish labor standards, temper the rush toward genetic engineering, and so on.

This is a suggestive idea, and something like it is bound to come. Yet as Beatty himself points out, the New Deal served largely to save corporate capitalism from its own excesses. The World Trade Organization, which is run primarily for its corporate constituents, is the first step toward the new global order, and not exactly a promising one. Already Philip Morris has gotten behind the idea of a global treaty on tobacco marketing. One suspects its goal is not to put itself out of business.

There will always be a need for cops on the beat, for corporations as for real people. We can work for an arrangement that is more than a global version of the company town. There's a particular need to reestablish boundaries between corporations and the rest of life—to declare particular realms (such as childhood and aspects of the gene pool) off limits. But while we construct a system of external restraint, it would be well to inquire into the nature of the

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entity that requires all this policing.

The question requires a shift of mental gears. The corporation has attained an almost metaphysical stature in American life—an apotheosis of the market rather than just a contrivance of fallible humans. Yet the process by which the modern corporation came about does not square with this exalted status.

In fact, the story of the corporation is practically a primer of contemporary right-wing demonology. Outlandish public subsidy, industrial policy, judicial activism, revenue mongering by corrupt politicians—it's all here. As for unintended consequences, nothing the government has created has produced so many.

The corporation has attained an almost metaphysical stature in American life—an apotheosis of the market rather than just a contrivance of fallible humans.

From Monastaries to Monopolies

The first corporations in the Western tradition were monasteries, boroughs, guilds, and the like. They were vehicles of community and social cohesion; they sought to restrain the tendencies toward self-seeking—not provide an institutional amplifier for them. By the time of the American Revolution, this form had evolved into a kind of franchise, chartered by the legislature to perform a specific public function, such as running a toll road or a bridge. These early business corporations were limited in size and scope; and there was little reason to suspect that such creatures of the state would one day become the dominant institutions in it.

Thus there is no provision in the Constitution for the large business corporation. The Founders thought they were dealing with a polity of individuals organized as interests. The corporation was an extension of the government, and thus would be restrained by the checks and balances by which they sought to hold institutional power in check. That assumption fell apart in the period that came to be described as "Jacksonian Democracy." The practice of granting charters one by one through legislation had given rise to corruption and abuse, and the Jacksonians opened up the corporate form to all comers, through general incorporation laws.

But their aim was to bust up monopolies, not to absolve corporations of the responsibilities that came with the license to operate in that form. A corporate charter bestows an extraordinary privilege—exemption from common law rules of personal responsibility. It enables the owners of the corporation to say in effect, "I didn't do it, your honor. The corporation did." People still believed that those so privileged owed something to society in return. "While the rights of private property are sacredly guarded," wrote Jacksonian Chief Justice Roger Taney in 1837, "we must not forget that the community also has rights."

Accordingly, free incorporation laws typically included limits on the size and scope of the corporation. Some expired after a given period, like broadcast licenses today. The existence of such charter restrictions was why Rockefeller and others resorted to secret trust agreements to construct their corporate empires; their charters wouldn't let them purchase stock in other companies.

That's where things stood until a New Jersey governor by the name of Leon Abbett came on the scene. Abbett was what rightward polemicists today would call a "revenue-hungry politician." Where others saw dangerous agglomerations of economic power, he saw money for the state's coffers—along with under-the-table emoluments for himself. Abbett proceeded to rewrite New Jersey's corporate charter laws to make them a little like a Liberian flag of convenience. Pay the fee and you could do pretty much whatever you wanted. By 1900, New Jersey chartered some 95 percent of the nation's major corporations.

More than one could play this game, however. Delaware soon outbid New Jersey—in part by insulating managers from pesky shareholders—and ultimately won the ensuing race to the bottom. Today, a fair portion of the world's largest corporations exist in file drawers in law offices in Wilmington. This means that the ground rules for the major players in the global economy have been constructed largely to fill the revenue needs of one of the nation's smallest state—and were drafted by corporate lawyers for the benefit of their clients. (In Delaware, for example, corporate officers are fully indemnified for all court costs and settlements and thus are insulated from

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civil and criminal responsibility.)

Meanwhile the visible hand of government was providing subsidies on a scale that would cause the most prolific pork-barreler of today to blush. The first truly national corporations were the railroads, and they began with the help of large government land grants, along with capital infusions, free surveying, and federal troops dispatched to rout the natives when necessary. An activist Supreme Court played a big role as well. In *Santa Clara County vs. Southern Pacific Railroad Company*, decided in 1886, the court declared that corporations are "persons" within the terms of the 14th Amendment and thus are entitled to full constitutional protection.

The court cited no precedent for this assertion, nor even justification. It did "not wish to hear argument on the question," it said. Some 50 years later, Justice Hugo Black observed that "Neither the history nor the language of the 14th Amendment justify the belief that corporations are included within its protection." Nevertheless, a constitutional provision designed to ensure the rights of the most vulnerable citizens—former slaves—became a protection to the most powerful instead.

Among other things, this left states helpless to counter the charter-mongering of New Jersey. Absent *Santa Clara*, other states might conceivably have refused to honor the degraded New Jersey charters. But since corporations were now "persons," the court eventually held that other states didn't have that choice. The only alternative was to try to curb the worst abuses of these new juggernauts. Thus was born the federal regulatory apparatus—antitrust laws, the Interstate Commerce Commission, pure food and drug laws, and the rest. In other words, the federal regulatory state didn't leap unbidden from the imaginations of statist schemers. It was largely a response to the corporate economy, and to the urbanization that came with it. Then, as now, a corporate economy and a centralized state go hand in hand.

Charting a New Course

There's a case to be made that the emergence of the current form of corporation, while not pretty, served a useful end. It mobilized the entrepreneurial and managerial energies that filled a sprawling continent and tapped its vast resources. The job could have been done better and with more attention to long-term implications. Still, it did get done; and given the circumstances of the 19th century, perhaps it was better to err on the side of permissiveness.

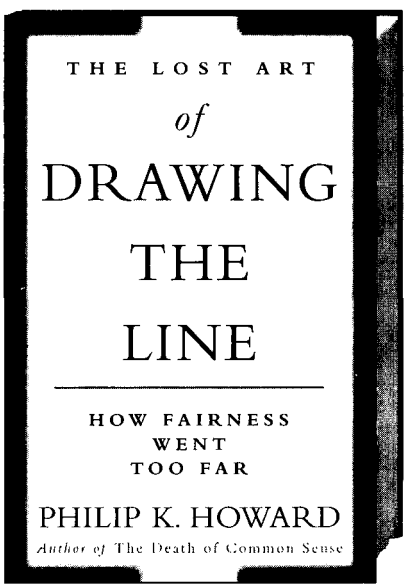
But the corporate form that emerged from the 19th century is essentially an engine of appetite. It takes the

Zero tolerance.

Get-rich lawsuits.

Tyranny of teachers' union "rights."

Who's in charge around here?



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romantic individualism of that era and transplants it into an institutional machinery geared exclusively to self-enhancement, without regard to implications for the context in which it grows. That is a definition of a cancer; and while it didn't seem to matter much in the 19th century—so much space to conquer, so many resources to tap—today that is no longer the case. Where once there was an abundance of social and environmental space to absorb the side effects of large-scale enterprise, today the sponge is getting full. A cell-phone purchase may bring happiness (or whatever) to the purchaser but misery to many others who must share the coffee shop or subway car while the caller yaks. The purchaser of the SUV might get to feel like a suburban cowpoke, but everyone else gets less space on the road, more brutal crashes, and tighter gas supplies as well.

On a larger scale, the implications of genetic engineering, global warming and the rest push the boundaries of human life itself. In conventional economic terms, the externalities of corporate enterprise are starting to outweigh the internalities—the negative side-effects of production and consumption are becoming larger than the presumed benefits to the parties immediately involved. Yet the corporation has evolved to maximize such externalities; when it shifts costs onto the social structure or the environment, then it's own bottom line increases.

In a global economy, this chain of unintended consequence extends to all corners. The organizing principle of the corporation becomes the mode of governance of human life itself. So it is not extraordinary to ask whether the version of the corporation that emerged in 19th-century America, with the help of activist judges and pork-barreling, revenue hungry politicians, is adequate to the challenges of the 21st. To put this another way, if the government is as stupid as our friends on the right contend, then might it not have made a few mistakes in the form of corporation that it launched upon the world?

There are people who dispute the premise of the question, of course. Milton Friedman and others contend that corporations should not concern themselves with anything besides making money. They serve humanity best when they serve themselves most. Most of us probably have known people like that, and they weren't the kind we'd want to fill the world with—especially if they were the size of Exxon or Microsoft. A more serious objection is that corporations can do ample good already, given enlightened management (which is no small given). Yes, the corporate responsibility movement is to be applauded. But it is vulnerable in the extreme—to Wall Street pressures, the passing of an inspired leader, corporate takeovers, the downward pull of less conscientious competitors. When competitors move production to low-wage sweatshops abroad, even the most well-meaning maker of dungarees or sneakers eventually has to follow.

In this world the wicked often do prosper. As long as the corporate charter says that making money is the corporation's only objective, a CEO invites shareholder lawsuits if he or she pursues other goals. By contrast, if we built a larger mission right into the governing document—the corporate soul—as in the old days, then the good guys would have a stronger hand. When broadcasters were held to a community-service standard as a condition of their licenses, news departments flourished. A more permissive regime has enabled broadcast corporations to score financially, especially in radio. Public service has not fared as well.

Perhaps the answer lies in different kinds of corporations—new institutional tools designed for different tasks. There could be one type for small start-up firms that need lots of room for experiment and risk. As a company grew larger the society could expect more of it. Concerns for the environment, workers, local communities, and the rest could become warp and woof of the charter—the basic contract with the community—so that CEOs would not be dragged constantly down to the lowest common denominator.

In this approach, we could do away with much bureaucratic regulation, such as the mountainous economic sophistry that attends antitrust litigation today. If the charter said a company could grow only so big, or control only so much market share, that's how big it could grow. Moreover, if the charter required corporations to take responsibility for some of the costs they now "externalize" upon the rest of us, they could use their own ingenuity to meet those responsibilities in the most efficient manner. Entrepreneurial energies would still prevail, only in more directions. Already, such measures as pollution taxes and fees turn environmental clean-up into a bottom-line mandate. Charter revision could accomplish the same thing on a larger scale.

Whatever the exact approach, it is time for the corporation to grow up. If it is to keep the legal status of a person, then it should accept the responsibilities that we expect of persons as they mature. A corporation, declared Chief Justice John Marshall, is but "an artificial being, invisible, intangible, existing only in contemplation of law." It is a social creation, a projection of the society's values and aspirations. As the creator, so the creation—and the time is long overdue to ask whether the two still match. ●

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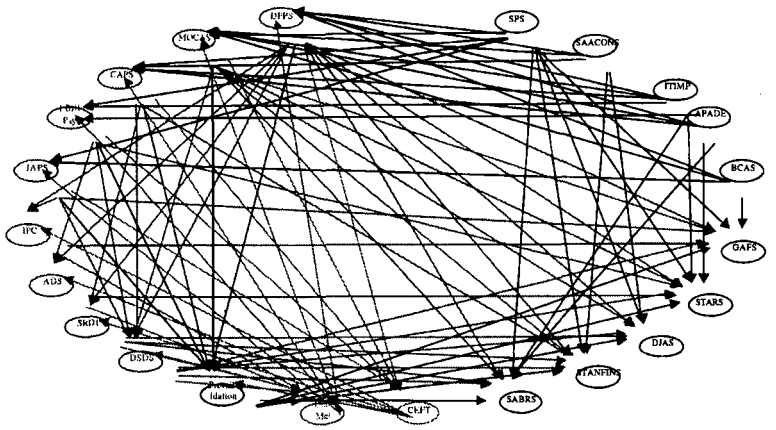
Tidbits & Outrages

Table III: SYSTEM USED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TO TRACK CONTRACT AND VENDOR PAYMENTS



Source: The Department of Defense

Image is everything.

"How do I know you are genuine? ... The words you say are important, but they are much less important than the visuals and the vocals."

~ Mark Montini, a trainer at the Leadership Institute for ambitious young Republicans

"The youth of our nation is the clearest mirror of our performance."
~Robert F. Kennedy

"You know, I haven't made up my mind, so I haven't like, I have not getting to the point of being able to, you know I don't want to start answering ... specific questions about the race. I will let you know if I decide to race"

~Max Kennedy, 2001, on whether he would run for Congress. He ultimately decided not to.

Gale Norton's multiple-use dream

From a report issued by Fred Thompson and the Committee on Governmental Affairs: "According to an internal agency report, the Algodones Dunes in California have become 'unsafe for family recreation activity,' due to drug and alcohol use and general lawlessness. Near-riots on weekends feature crowds hurling beer cans and other objects at rangers, and yelling, 'Kill the cops.' During Presidents' Day weekend, one ranger was hit with a bag of fecal matter, while another was injured when deliberately run over by a dune buggy."

The Slim Jim lobby got to her...

Townsend Seeks to Fund Auto Theft Program

THEFT, *From B1*

Prevention Council and gave it a dedicated funding source.

Primarily, the money goes to local jurisdictions in the form of grants. Counties and cities use the money to pay for auto crime units in police departments, public awareness programs and specialized prosecutors.

State crime statistics show that in 1995, the year the program began, auto thefts numbered 36,176. In 1999, the last year for which statistics are available, that number had drooped by 28 percent to 26,067.

being disbanded," Duncan said. "Here we've had a series of radio ads from the lieutenant governor talking about what a big problem this is, and now the state has cut the legs out from under these programs."

Michael Sarbanes, Townsend's director of policy and planning, said there are several plans in the works to ensure that the state maintains its efforts, despite the cuts. One would focus funding in the jurisdictions with the most auto theft. Another option involves a task force that has been set up to study the state's auto salvage fees. If those fees are increased, Sarbanes said the additional money could be used to fund auto-theft programs.

From a Washington Post article on Maryland Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend.

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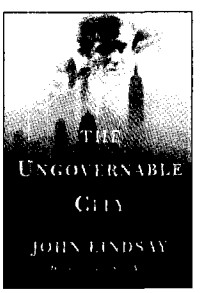
Over the Rainbow

Liberals are running big cities again. But they'll be more like Rudy Giuliani than John Lindsay.

BY JIM SLEEPER

"L.A. TURNS TO THE LEFT," HERALDED the *Los Angeles Times* after the June 5 victory of the city's next mayor, liberal Democrat James Hahn. The choice of the "Rainbow" tribune, congresswoman Maxine Waters, and local municipal unions, Hahn replaced departing centrist Republican Richard Riordan. The same day, voters in New Jersey's second largest metropolis, Jersey City, chose black liberal Glenn Cunningham to replace conservative Republican Mayor Bret Schundler, who's running for governor. In Philadelphia, another stalwart black liberal, John Street, has replaced once-touted centrist Ed Rendell. Detroit and Cleveland are bidding farewell to retiring fiscally conservative black Democratic mayors Dennis Archer and Michael White. And in New York, four liberal Democrats and two far-from-right-wing Republicans—media mogul Michael Bloomberg and former deputy mayor Herman Badillo—are battling to succeed Rudy Giuliani, the country's best-known scourge of Rainbow politics.



THE UNGOVERNABLE CITY:
John Lindsay and His Struggle to Save New York
by Vincent J. Cannato
Basic Books, $35.00

It seems only yesterday that the departing centrists, along with Chicago's Richard M. Daley and Washington, D.C.'s Anthony Williams, threw out mayors weaned on Great Society spending and racial grievance politics. The centrists tried to reshape municipal work forces, social-welfare bureaucracies, and the color-coding of civic life. Much of this was constructive, but in the short run, it hurt many of those with the thinnest wallets and political skins. Are the Los Angeles and Jersey City elections part of a liberal counterrevolution?

Not quite. In Los Angeles, Hahn vowed a crackdown on gangs and had strong backing from police unions; even some of his heavily black municipal-union support is more protectionist than liberal. And he beat his equally liberal Democratic opponent, Antonio Villaraigosa, by nearly eight points, thanks in part to ugly, suggestive ads tying Villaraigosa to the drug trade—this despite Villaraigosa's touting Giuliani's quality-of-life initiatives in New York. In Gotham, meanwhile, Mark Green, the leading liberal vying to succeed Giuliani (he was Mayor David Dinkins' highly visible Consumer Affairs Commissioner), has abandoned his opposition to welfare reform and workfare and taken on the teachers' union over hiring policies. In a move reminiscent of Hahn, Green sought and got the endorsement of Giuliani's former police commissioner, William Bratton.

Clearly, the terms of civic discourse and urban policy have changed. So have big-city populations, with hundreds of thousands of non-white immigrants whose understandings of race are more fluid and ecumenical than those of most American blacks and whites. The

JIM SLEEPER, *author of* Liberal Racism *and* The Closest of Strangers: Liberalism and the Politics of Race in New York, *teaches a course on journalism, liberalism, and democracy at Yale.*

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newcomers are carving out economic niches amid bigotry and isolation to win capital, connections, and economic skills. Their small-business networks, sustained at first by ethnic ties, soon transcend ethnocentrism. So do ethnically inflected but universalist struggles to organize new, exploited workers, as New York's heavily Jewish garment- workers' unions did decades ago and Los Angeles janitors and restaurant workers are doing now.

The question is whether new mayors like Hahn and Cunningham will fall back into the grip of government bureaucracies, public-employee unions, and racial-grievance-mongers who barely a decade ago paralyzed Rainbow mayors such as Coleman Young, Marion Barry, and David Dinkins. Will the new mayors and their supporters attribute past defeats like Dinkins' (and successes like Giuliani's) to ups and downs in crime, racism, and right-wing economics? Or will they admit that liberals let their preoccupation with such demons sap their fiscal and racial restraint?

Lindsay is the whipping boy for a failed urban liberalism. Yet memories of his crusading still moisten eyes among elites in politics and media.

They would do well to study the fate of New York Mayor John Lindsay, the ur-mayor of Rainbow politics, who from 1966 to 1973 elevated racial claims to levels that energized but soon palsied the political imaginations of his many emulators. It would be going too far to say that without him, there'd have been no Young, Barry, or Dinkins; but Lindsay legitimized fiscal fantasies and racial taboos that made dependency and resentment the only urban growth industries. He is the whipping boy for a failed urban liberalism in sections of Fred Siegel's *The Future Once Happened Here* and Tamar Jacoby's *Someone Else's House*. Yet memories of his crusading still moisten eyes among elites with clout in politics and media in New York and Los Angeles.

They might learn something from Vincent J. Cannato's *The Ungovernable City*, which chronicles Lindsay's long public agony dispassionately. That's surprising in a writer who comes from the white ethnic working class Lindsay misconstrued and who has been active in the conservative movement. (Cannato worked for Jersey City's Schundler.) Maybe his Columbia Ph.D. in history has tempered him; maybe his publisher had him bleach some polemics for a definitive political biography appearing so soon after Lindsay's death last December. Yet Cannato seems to have respected Lindsay's courage and integrity, if not his social intelligence.

Sir Galahad-on-Hudson

In November 1965, when the city chose Lindsay for its mayor, the swift currents of urban instruction that course through its neighborhoods and businesses to transform immigrants into Americans were faltering. It was a time of urban drift unparalleled since the 1930s, when Republican maverick Fiorello LaGuardia had defeated the Irish-run Tammany machine and broadened the city government's constituencies and mission. Lindsay vowed to broaden both even more. He defeated the white-ethnic, union-bound liberalism of LaGuardia's legatees thanks to a vague, media-hyped, yet justified unease at demographic undertows and civic decay.

In LaGuardia's Depression-wracked years, national immigration restrictions had helped the city digest half a century's deluge of newcomers, and even then only with fiscal and moral support from the New Deal and a just war. But when Lindsay arrived, the city had lost 800,000 of its immigrant success stories to suburbia and gained 800,000 poor black and Hispanic "immigrants" from the South and Puerto Rico. LaGuardia's legatees feared them morally and materially, which amounted to the same thing in their fragile neighborhood ecologies. Murders had more than doubled since 1955, from 306 to 681 annually, and while those numbers would seem almost laughably low by the 1980s, New Yorkers were rightly alarmed by the trends.

Vivid Camelot memories, too, made the handsome young Yalie from Manhattan's Silk Stocking congressional district seem the second coming of an Ivy League prince martyred two years before. "He is fresh, and everyone else is tired," wrote Murray Kempton, and the phrase became Lindsay's slogan. The political chimes of the hour made him the herald of a liberal urban crusade, even if he was too glamorous (and white) to be prototypical of its new breed of mayor. His personal forays into streets roiling with racial tensions

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helped spare New York the riots that devastated other cities. Some of these visits by the tall, privileged WASP seemed at once expiatory and arrogant, but Lindsay wasn't wrong to say: "I think it's important for the people in the ghettos to see their mayor. They've got to feel somebody is interested in them. You can tell from the double-takes how much the visits are appreciated."

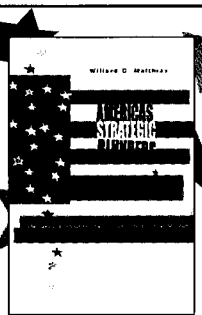
The question was what one did after visiting. Roger Starr, later Mayor Arthur Beame's housing administrator, observed that Lindsay seemed comfortable with two kinds of people: those with so little money that they needed more of it just to scrape by, and those who had so much that they needed to give some of it away. Lindsay thought the non-white poor the most public-spirited of all; they were where the action was, storming welfare centers, demanding control of schools. He didn't notice that "the poor" or those who spoke for them were active in public life only because they had nowhere else to go and that, the moment they did, civic spirit disappeared along with the megaphones.

As vice-chair of the national Kerner Commission on civil disorders, Lindsay wrote the "two nations, separate and unequal" mantra that raised and then froze liberal consciousness about race. With some twists and turns, Lindsay's Rainbow emulators replaced old-school white mayors like Sam Yorty in Los Angeles, Richard J. Daley in Chicago, Ivan Allen in Atlanta, Frank Rizzo in Philadelphia, and the functionaries Congress installed over the District of Columbia. But the shift from the old ethnic-machine politics to the welfare-state programs which Lindsay inaugurated replaced one kind of corruption with another. The new politics of protest traded on accusations and presumptions of racism and on denials of fiscal reality in a country based on a love-hate relationship with its cities. Cannato's accounts of Lindsay's role in this prompt a few double-takes now.

Here's one: he'd been mayor barely two months when he staggered from a humiliating transit-strike settlement to the CBS studios to tell New Yorkers, "Our city is facing a financial crisis." The city's expenses were enormous, no matter how one defined its social obligations, but Lindsay cast the latter so apocalyptically that in *The Cost of Good Intentions*, his former deputy budget director, Charles R. Morris, would note dryly that City Hall's war on poverty made about as much sense as a municipal program to explore outer space. Lindsay proposed the unthinkable: a city income tax, even on non-residents who worked in the city. Their "commuter tax" was justified by fairness, not to mention the tactical necessity of keeping the middle class from leaving town to escape the new levy. Suburban legislators were not amused, and since Lindsay's initiatives required state legislation, he stood alone. He moralized, playing Kant, not Machiavelli: "Let the objectors think about the city a little bit as they turn their backs on it every day at five o'clock with bitterness and condescension."

He won, with Governor Nelson Rockefeller's grudging help, because demographic upheavals and civil-rights imperatives trumped fiscal realism. He won also by turning his back on lower-middle-class Jews and Catholics in those fragile neighborhoods outside Manhattan, people who weren't the city's glitterati or gutterati but its glue—homeowners, shopkeepers, artisans, lawyers, teachers, and municipal engineers. Lindsay didn't hate them; he simply didn't understand them. He didn't share their assumptions about how to attack poverty, which they themselves had overcome, sometimes through ethnocentric demagogy and extralegal hustling, but often through hard organizing and work in tight families and communities.

They didn't find it as unthinkable as he that, since cities are wards of their states and playthings of capitalism, the only way to fund them is to spend and tax judiciously in order to keep private investment. Nor were these burghers as racist as we have since been



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indoctrinated to believe. They knew that the more productive a person, the less time and emotional energy he or she spends thinking about the color of someone who's ready to deal. A distinctive and enduring characteristic of New York liberals is that they deny this decisive truth.

Yet Lindsay hectored its believers, even in their Florida refuges, during his doomed 1972 presidential campaign to become national tribune of all cities. Cannato lets Theodore White recount how Lindsay tried to rouse a Florida audience of aging New Yorkers: "If there was any fight in them it was to defend the sun and the quiet to which they had come to doze ... far from sirens in the night ... And here was Lindsay ... bringing to these green lawns and tranquil places the nightmares" they were trying to escape. Cannato's accounts of how their old neighborhoods had buckled in racial and economic riptides and ham-handed social engineering are so heartbreaking you want to cry, "Where was *their* mayor?" In *Manchild in the Promised Land*, a civil-rights classic in Lindsay's time, author Claude Brown wrote of his white landlords and employers, "They were all little people, and I was demanding that they suddenly become big, tremendous, and understand this gigantic problem that the nation was trying to solve." Lindsay kept demanding it, even as Brown was having second thoughts.

Cannato's accounts of how their old neighborhoods had buckled under ham-handed social engineering are so heartbreaking you want to cry, "Where was their mayor?"

Another double-take: Lindsay defending what *The Daily News* called his "come-and-get-it" welfare programs before the Senate Finance Committee in 1969. Connecticut Sen. Abraham Ribicoff noted that New York looked filthy and asked why welfare recipients couldn't clean streets for their own benefit and the city's. Cannato reports the mayor's shock: "The use of welfare mothers with brooms and spikes in the middle of Fifth Avenue brings us back to the dark ages," he said, calling it "rather extraordinary in view of modern thought."

New York Yankees

Lindsay was irresistible to New York's legions of moralists, a word that in America carries the taint of itinerant revivalists dropping in on the lower orders to tell other people how to behave. Lindsay was quietly, genuinely moral, but he could get moralistic to the point of bombast, drawing others with streaks of a knight-errantry unsuited to urban governance.

Some white liberals, for example, fresh from symbolic forays into the South, returned to New York impatient with the anti-discrimination measures already gathering legitimacy and steam in the city's life. These they outstripped with Draconian plans for white-ethnic neighborhoods—doomed experiments in busing and scatter-site, low-income housing. The moralists did not understand how such neighborhoods were despoiled by urban renewal programs and subsidies to real-estate operators already "integrating" them to destroy them for tax write-offs and arson insurance. Lindsay administrators stumbled into unsavory alliances with such predators, even giving some of them awards for dumping welfare families next to old Jewish ladies. Policy savants who thought nothing of breaking up beleaguered white neighborhoods in this way championed black "community control" of the wreckage left behind.

They didn't understand how neighborhoods filter the city's hard knocks and dissonance, sustaining a balance of relaxed play and social obligation within which commitments to strangers can flower. A good neighborhood gives children spontaneous but manageable challenges beyond the front stoop. It introduces them to the satisfactions of roles which the market rewards only indirectly, if at all: nurturer, defender, uplifter, communicant, teammate, lover, friend. Cosmopolitan adults may find all this in non-spatial networks or at St. Paul's preparatory school and at Yale, as did Lindsay. But most New Yorkers' decency and generosity grow in parish halls and schools, community centers, taverns, diners, and parks. New York's capital and cultural resources come from all over the world, but its neighborhoods are the crucibles of its capacity to draw and transform them into the achievements of a civilization.

A delicate ecology, indeed, and as urban planners

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accelerated its destruction, moralists, and ideologues empowered hustlers of the poor tear at the same local structures and conventions. Although flight from cities began not with racial change but with the well-subsidized and marketed lure of greener suburban pastures, liberal moralism and policy accelerated it. The decay of the city's white-ethnic idiom, from Ralph Kramden's railings to the more cryptic "fuggedaboutit," was partly a bigoted reaction to racial change, but it was also a moral reaction to the sluicing of poor, dysfunctional households into stable neighborhoods. It also reflected a legitimate if unfashionable anger at liberals' endless, enraging rationalizations for violent crime. Cannato recounts how utterly antithetical delusions about where to place blame for it clashed in a referendum that ended Lindsay's civilian review board for the police.

Stunned by the ferocity of white-ethnic resistance, moralists redoubled their efforts to punish intransigents and affirm their own virtue. Few have reckoned with their role in the rapid-fire neighborhood decay whose specter haunts the politics of the outer boroughs. Upon leaving office, Lindsay wrote a novel, *The Edge*, so unnervingly vacuous in its stereotyping of bigots assailing a noble young congressman that Christopher Lehmann-Haupt of *The New York Times* suggested we'd all be better off pretending it had never been published. By comparison, Ed Koch's *Rudy Giuliani, Nasty Man* (a book he, too, actually wrote and published) reads like Plutarch or Marcus Aurelius.

Reviewing how Lindsay and the Ford Foundation's empowerment of the poor's hustlers offended both middle-class teachers and poor blacks by ceding "community control" to people who hadn't enough integrity to carry the bags of a Martin Luther King, Jr. or a Malcolm X, the writer Martin Mayer offered an epitaph for political moralists 30 years ago: "As they say around the criminal courts, the lawyer always goes home. Like the criminal lawyer, the academician, or the foundation officer's ... job is secure however many mistakes he makes, and if his advice gets his clients into even worse trouble, he just never sees them again."

Lindsay's Legacy

Giuliani grew up in the white-ethnic, racially changing New York which Lindsay misunderstood. Where the latter signaled a war on racism and poverty, only to accelerate neighborhood decay and offer window dressing, the former has sent different signals. Instead of applying window dressing, he fixes "broken windows," which, too, are only symptoms of decay but which, when left untended, deepen the isolation of those forced to live with them. Instead of championing public-housing bureaucracies, he has facilitated Nehemiah homeownership programs, affordable to social workers and transit employees, that are reviving neighborhoods like East New York, where Linsday sallied in vain. Welfare recipients now clean parks and streets, and by their own account are the better for it; the sanitation union is still in business, too, but not swaggering. Non-white immigrant business networks are proliferating, helped by the plunge in violent crime and by city economic-development programs.

Few of Lindsay's legatees in the press, politics, and philanthropies acknowledge these gains. Nor have they learned that a mayor who cares about the oppressed must wrest control of parks and subways from some of them to spare the others anarchy and give their decency a margin of green space, mobility, and hope. Giuliani has had to drag elites kicking and screaming into accommodating this. Some do accept it, if only because the city's new luster and vigor make members of its chattering and celebrity classes feel what they want to feel most: safe and important.

Whatever the reasons, the new round of mayoral elections in New York and other cities suggests not a regression to the race-and-entitlement-obsessed liberalism Lindsay pioneered but a forward-looking synthesis. Eulogizing him at a memorial service on January 26, Giuliani said that his legacy "will continue to be debated in the civic discussions that he loved so well. But let the record show that John Lindsay refused to give up on cities when others were abandoning them. He was determined to fashion a new kind of politics that reflected the unique and diverse spirit of the greatest city on earth. He was independent. He was outspoken. He was a reformer."

The same dispositions have been put to different uses by departing centrist mayors, both black and white. They have taught what Cannato's chronicle suggests: While municipal governance may be an adventure, it is not a morality play, even in a city as self-important as New York. A city is a trust for the benefit of people, especially "little people," who are struggling to be productive, whatever their color or culture. Those who dodge or disdain that struggle to grab what they can and protect it in municipal fiefdoms have to be shouldered out of urban politics, again and again. And those who try to ease their more-privileged consciences by doting on the unfocused vitality and rage of the poor have to be retired before they can do the poor and the city too much damage. ●

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Political Booknotes

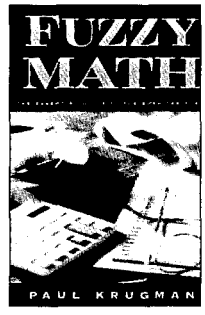
Duped by Dubya

By Walter Shapiro

THE MORNING AFTER A SUPINE Congress passed the Bush tax-cut bill, Paul Krugman took refuge in the greatest privilege of a newspaper columnist—the immediate ability to fulminate, to fume, to foam, to froth, to fret, and to work oneself into a frenzy in print. Until the final legislation took shape, Krugman declared in his *New York Times* column, "I thought that the fraudulence of the tax plan would take a few months to become totally obvious. But I underestimated the smirking contempt of the tax cutters for the public's intelligence."

Krugman, in his rightful contempt for this "abomination," made another small miscalculation. Less than two weeks before the bill was rushed to President George W. Bush for his triumphant signature (the president dropped his pen during the ceremony), Krugman published a 128-page screed against the tax bill. Talk about a book with the shelf life of fresh-caught scrod. But there is no need for this slim volume to become pulped non-fiction. The columnist-economist (as strange a hyphenated professional existence as, say, an actress-botanist) is such an artful explainer that it doesn't really matter that this book is already past its pull date. For what Krugman really offers is a toxic-waste-dump tour of the dubious premises that contaminate all Bush-era economic thinking, from the administration's deliberately parsimonious budget to the continuing shell games over the Social Security and Medicare trust funds.

Even as a devoted student of the fiscal analyses by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and Citizens for Tax Justice, I found Krugman's book brimming with statistics and arguments that I had not read elsewhere. To cite one telling example, which refutes conservative claims that rapacious federal bureaucrats are draining the Treasury dry, non-defense discretionary spending has, since 1986, grown at a slower rate than the economy as a whole. What we regard as the government—the Education Department, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Immigration and Naturalization Service—has been underfunded for 15 years. As Krugman puts it, "If you think that we suffer from a severe case of big government you should be aware that even civilian discretionary spending is lower today as a share of the economy than it has been since Dwight Eisenhower—yes, Eisenhower—was president."



FUZZY MATH:
The Essential Guide to the Bush Tax Plan
by Paul Krugman
W.W. Norton & Company, $17.00

In outlining his philosophical and practical objections to the tax bill itself, Krugman gives the greatest weight to the argument that the funds simply will not be there to pay for it. This is the fiscal-responsibility case that the congressional Democrats largely abandoned as soon as the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) computers projected a magic $5.6 trillion surplus over the next 10 years. Instead, most Democratic oratory, echoing the mock populism of Al Gore's presidential campaign, zeroed in on the unfairness of the tax-relief windfall awaiting the upper 1 percent. But such inept class warfare obscured the fallacies inherent in the CBO's 10-year budget estimates. For Krugman points out that just because the CBO projections are non-political doesn't make them accurate. There is a major bias in the CBO's idiot-savant assumption that all discretionary federal spending will remain unchanged for the next decade, aside from inflation adjustments. "The U.S. population is expected to grow about 10 percent over the next decade," Krugman writes, "so the CBO's projection assumes a 10-percent *decline* in real per capita spending." A more reasonable analysis, pegging discretionary federal spending to the anticipated growth in what economists call the Gross Domestic Product, would trim $600 billion off the surplus estimates.

Sometimes Krugman, who freely admits, "I have no particular expertise in political analysis," goes a bit over the top in his rhetorical zeal, such as when he claims that "conservatives would like to see Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and maybe even Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal rolled back." Not exactly. What Krugman misses is the way that Bush's smiley-faced compassionate conservatism differs from Newt Gingrich's down-with-government jeremiads. The Bush budget doesn't try to eliminate such easy right-wing targets as the National Endowment for the Arts and Amtrak subsidies. Instead, Bush, unlike Ronald Reagan, has made his peace with existing governmental programs. The president's conservative agenda is built around placing such a fiscal straitjacket on the federal government that Congress will not able to create *new* initiatives or entitlements.

Krugman, in his introduction, explains that "this book offers me an opportunity for a longer form of discussion that can't be squeezed into 735-word columns in *The New York Times*." Yes, for all its soap-box-derby freedoms, the constricted length of a newspaper column does indeed militate against complex analysis. Now that he has got the hang of the column-writing dodge, Krugman probably felt that the 128-page heft of *Fuzzy Math* made it an epic saga on par with *War and Peace*. But for the rest of us, this valuable guide to how we were all bush-whacked on taxes is more akin to an old Kurt Vonnegut volume called *Welcome to the Monkey House*.

WALTER SHAPIRO *is a political columnist for* USA Today *and a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly.

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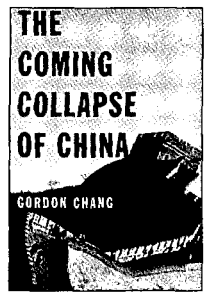
Slouching Tiger

By Jacob Heilbrunn

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION IS seeking an enemy abroad, and China has obliged. The bluff and bluster of Beijing during the recent spy plane flap gave American conservatives running room to advocate a return to Cold War-era policies. But no sooner had Donald Rumsfeld's Pentagon announced that the United States was cutting off military ties with China than the Bush White House backed off the order and, in the meantime, continues to lobby Congress in support of increased trade with China. In the collision between commerce and confrontation, the businessman continues to win out in the GOP.



THE COMING COLLAPSE OF CHINA
by Gordon G. Chang
Random House, $25.95

Who has it right? Is China, as the hawks would have it, a new Wilhelmine Germany, clamoring for its place in the sun? Or is it, as the business lobby promises, a formerly totalitarian country seduced into democratic ways by the lure of the market?

In *The Coming Collapse of China*, Gordon G. Chang says that both sides have it wrong. China, he declares, is headed for the scrapheap of history. It's certainly a case worth considering. One empire after another collapsed in the past century. Why should China, an old-fashioned empire made up of hundreds of different ethnic groupings, be any different?

Chang, a lawyer who worked for two decades in China, has written an impassioned book that rests on penetrating diagnoses and old-fashioned gumshoe reporting, conducting interviews with everyone from the high-and-mighty to the common peasant. His aim is to present an unvarnished portrait of China, free of the romanticism of the business lobby and the alarmism of the new cold warriors.

Chang focuses on the Communist Party, arguing that its failure to adapt to new economic and political challenges has made it as vulnerable to upheaval as previous Chinese imperial dynasties. He ascribes much importance to the emergence of the Falun Gong and contrasts it with the moral emptiness of the Communists. The best that Fu Qing-yuan, director of the Research Institute of Marxism-Leninism, can tell him is that "Many people in China are facing a crisis of faith. But I still believe that the majority of the Chinese people believe in dialectical materialism."

Chang notes that China is a hotbed of religious growth. One sign of religious fervor has come in the mushrooming of so-called "house churches." These Christian evangelical churches are independent of the government and meet secretly. They have been the target of much persecution. Then there is the well-known Falun Gong, which first rang alarm bells among the Communist leadership when it became clear that the movement had numerous adherents among party cadres. As Chang puts it, "Guess which religion is more popular: the one that promises a life after this one or the one that decrees that there is none?" Chang goes on to remark that while Falun Gong is just a large sect, "tomorrow anything can happen. The Falun Gong episode highlights yet again the weakening grip of the apparently mighty Communist Party."

This is too vague. "Anything can happen" is a meaningless phrase. What's more, the collapse of the party need not entail the disappearance of China. Chang believes that China will go the way of the Soviet Union, splitting into various states. Unfortunately, Chang does not provide particulars about how he envisions the breakup. Had he discussed the ethnic and geographic fault lines that he believes run through China, his argument would have been greatly strengthened.

He seems to believe that the difficulties that the regime faces—unemployment, religious tensions, loss of faith in communism—will inevitably lead to collapse. He points to Tibet as an example of a native population that has resisted Chinese rule, but does not go beyond what is commonly known about the dreadful Chinese occupation of that country. Nor is there much reason to believe that an uprising is imminent in Tibet. Chang also cites the Falun Gong as a harbinger of potential revolt. But he skips too easily from religious to ethnic tensions. After discussing the Falun Gong, he moves to Central Asia, where Uighurs are revolting against Chinese rule. But there is a fundamental difference between religious and ethnic tensions: Religious claims are transcendent ones, whereas ethnic tensions almost invariably rest on the claim of racial exclusivity.

Chang's overriding belief, however, is that economic troubles are the main weakness of the party. He notes, for example, that Beijing's insistence on incorporating minorities has led it to embark upon wasteful and destructive development projects, designed to employ large numbers of people in the fashion of 1960s World Bank projects. Again, however, Chang might have gone into greater detail about the projects that he considers to be squandering precious resources and funds. At most, he observes that "China cannot afford to waste its precious resources on conquering small minorities, especially when they are resistant."

In his eagerness to highlight the debility of the regime, Chang singles out the parlous state of heavy industry and the rise in unemployment. Reform, the elixir that is supposed to save China and the party, has left tens of millions unemployed. According to Chang, "at any one time, somewhere between 70 to 130 million migrants are roaming China for work." There is more: "While Beijing fusses over imagined enemies, labor protests occur across China as workers go for months without pay and as simple industrial disputes spiral out of control."

Chang is surely right to warn of the discontent of workers. He might have noted that one of the reasons that the Chinese leadership cracked down so viciously on the Tiananmen protesters in 1989 is that they were drawing supporters from the peasantry and workers—the traditional power base of the party. In somewhat overheated prose, Chang goes so far as to declare

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that "China is a lake of gasoline," and that an individual, "in some small town, or large city, will only have to throw a match."

The problem with this scenario is that, as Adam Smith observed, there is a great deal of ruin in a country. Ironically, Chang himself is adopting a materialist interpretation of China's past and future. He sees the Soviet scenario replaying itself in China. But it is important to remember that economic troubles alone were not what brought down the Soviet Union, though they helped mightily. The real question is whether or not the Chinese Communist Party, like the Soviet one, will lose its nerve and self-confidence. So far, it has not. Indeed, it seeks to bolster its claim to rule by turning to nationalism. How much communism still has to do with the Communist Party is an open question. Given the nationalist sentiment that seems to be brewing in China, the regime is being pushed to take a more assertive course against Taiwan and the United States. It seems clear that the regime underestimated public outrage after the American bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade and that, during the spy-plane crisis, it came close to doing so again.

No less than American businessmen, Chinese elites are torn between two desires: greed and the wish to stand up to the United States. It is also the case that the Communist Party has an object lesson in the perils of political reform in the collapse of the Soviet empire.

It is unfortunate that Chang does not speculate on how a transfer of power might take place. Does he really expect China to go up in flames? Or might a peaceful transition be in the offing? Chang understandably sees the disappearance of the Communist Party as an unalloyed good. Given what happened in Serbia and other nations run by so-called communists, however, it seems prudent to wonder what would follow the formal dissolution of the Communist Party. Perhaps an even more truculent China will emerge. Even a democratic China would have national interests that conflicted with American ones.

Whatever its shortcomings, though, Chang's book will surely stir up controversy simply because too little attention has been focused on the prospect of the disappearance of the Chinese empire. Perhaps the reason that Chang's argument hasn't come to the fore yet is because more upheaval is the last thing world leaders want. The only thing that China's neighbors, and the United States, may fear more than a rising China is one that collapses.

JACOB HEILBRUNN *is a member of* The Los Angeles Times' *editorial board.*

Philanthrocrats

By David Cay Johnston

AMONG FOUNDATION EXECUTIVES, there is an old saying that once hired you have had your last bad meal and your last honest compliment. Mark Dowie's latest book, *American Foundations: An Investigative History*, brings the promise of a thoughtful, provocative analysis of the privileged world of

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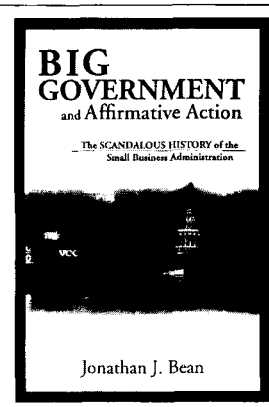

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private foundations from the point of view of grantseeking nonprofits. Since the only justification for private foundations is the existence of grantseekers, it is an engaging premise.

Dowie begins solidly with a sweeping overview of the foundation world, including its strengths (pioneering medical and agricultural research) and its weaknesses (flitting from issue to issue with all the commitment to anything meaningful of a pack of billionaire playboys).

AMERICAN FOUNDATIONS:
An Investigative History
by Mark Dowie
MIT Press, $29.95

That is as good as it gets. Despite a list of acknowledgments that indicates that he spoke with informed insiders, Dowie never cracks the world of philanthropy. Instead, he quickly falls into the arms of his leftist ideology, promoting his idea of what foundations should do. He doesn't trust readers to come to their conclusions based on marshalling the facts. And he apparently never talked to people who play key roles in some of the case histories he presents.

Dowie gives us a chapter on the Energy Foundation, which he describes as "the largest of a new breed of grantmaker known as a passthrough foundation." Yet he never explores the significance of passthrough foundations or examines any other examples. And we never find out just why the Energy Foundation seems to have veered away from initial promises to change the world through conservation and renewable energy and became an enforcer of the status quo. Dowie spoke to Hal Harvey, the foundation's executive director, but we never hear Harvey's side of the story.

Dowie asserts that we have never had an "investigative history" of foundations. This is one of the many signs that this is not Dowie's best work. Over the years, there have been two fine books exposing the insular, self-important world of philanthropy written by Waldemar Nielsen, whom Dowie quotes approvingly. Nielsen's *The Big Foundations* and *The Golden Donors* are classics of flint-eyed reporting on the shenanigans that occur around too many large pools of nearly unaccountable money. And critics of philanthropy, from the very-knowledgeable-but-out-of-touch organizers on the left to the in-touch-but-know-nothing organizers on the right, have all appraised the world of private foundations with a jaundiced eye.

Of course, there have also been a number of good examinations of the extraordinary success of the rich rightists who have openly pursued an agenda of grants to change the political, economic, social, and cultural landscape of America to their liking. Dowie covers this ground too, expressing revulsion at the members of the Philanthropic Roundtable and their ideological confrérès in grantmaking who have imbued Washington with a dozen institutes (Heritage, Cato, Competitive Enterprise, among others) that range from skilled marketers of provocative ideas to shills for the American oligarchs.

The important book Dowie could have written is to be found in a box on page 225 under the heading "Risk." In 112 words he identifies the theme that, had he built his book around, would have driven the "philanthrocrats" absolutely crazy.

"Foundation executives love to prattle on about the risks they take in their work," Dowie observes. "When program officers speak of risk, what they generally mean is the small risk of personal embarrassment in the event a project they fund fails." Here Dowie captures the lie behind the now-standard pledges by newly appointed presidents of grant-making foundations that theirs will be an era of "venture philanthropy." In two decades of writing about foundations (and marriage to the president of a community foundation) I have yet to meet one of these philanthropoids who published a list of failed grants.

Dowie recognizes the absurdity of this fear of failure. "So they picked a loser," he writes. "Who cares? There

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are no shareholders to complain. No bonds in default. No bank to foreclose. Yet, despite the risk-free nature of their work, philanthrocrats love to compare themselves to venture capitalists and entrepreneurs, who in fact take tremendous risks with their own and other people's money." Here is the real truth about the rampant intellectual fraud at so many of the big foundations.

And yet the reasons for this false bravado, this timidity in a world full of opportunity to make a difference, are also revealed by Dowie, however inadvertently.

The author, it seems, reviles those who really did seek to change the world and succeeded. Dowie damns them for the unintended consequences of their success, which he argues they had the duty to resolve. The Rockefellers spent decades lavishing money on the risky idea that science could improve crop yields and produce more grains to feed a growing world population. It worked. Indeed, as Dowie acknowledges, it is hailed as a triumph of private philanthropy. And yet Dowie criticizes the Rockefellers and others because more and better food has also meant a shift toward industrial farming, changing the economies of countries that depended on subsistence farmers and benefiting those with the capital to invest in farm machinery, intensive irrigation, herbicides, and to buy seeds instead of sowing some held back from their own crops. Instead of recognizing that every solution creates its own new problems, Dowie attacks those funding the Green Revolution for not solving this problem, as well.

Nothing ventured, nothing gained. And if you do gain, you get damned for that, too.

DAVID CAY JOHNSTON, *a Pulitzer Prize winner this year, covers tax policy for* The New York Times.

English Muffin

By Andrew Cockburn

AMONG THE MANY CONVENIENCES introduced in official Washington in recent times has been the convention that those aspiring to statesmanship do not actually have to behave like statespersons. Aspirants need only to conspicuously bury their noses in Professor James Chace's benign biography of former Secretary of State Dean Acheson. Even before his inauguration, George W. Bush figuratively brandished Acheson, apparently with the aim of demonstrating a scholarly preoccupation with diplomatic history while simultaneously proving that the 43rd president can actually read. A few years earlier, the Clinton administration, judging by press reports, fought the war over Kosovo with a gun in one hand and Acheson in the other.

It's not hard to see why today's placemen and women find such inspiration in the tale of this tweedy hero. While they struggle to find some purpose in American foreign policy in a fractured post-Cold War world, Acheson was presented with the simpler challenge of confronting Joseph Stalin, fighting the Korean War, rearming Western Europe, and stomping on the last flickering

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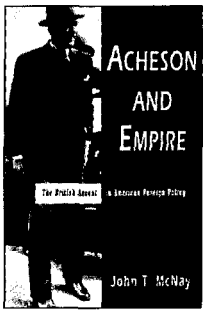
embers of American isolationism. He did the job nicely, while apparently behaving in a decent and gentlemanly manner—viz, his reluctance to abandon Alger Hiss.

John McNay's *Acheson and Empire, the British Accent in American Foreign Policy* comes therefore as a welcome palliative to the prevailing hagiography. McNay's view, in brief, is that Acheson was so solicitous of the welfare of the British Empire that, time and again, he acted against the best interests of the United States out of irrational deference to British policy. In the course of expounding this thesis, the author reminds us that there was much not to like in Dean Acheson—his tireless efforts, for example, on behalf of the racist Rhodesian regime that fought through the latter 1960s and 1970s to preserve white minority rule in what is now Zimbabwe. Chace, for reasons we can only conjecture, makes no mention of this.



ACHESON AND EMPIRE : The British Accent in American Foreign Policy
by John McNay
University of Missouri Press, $34.95

McNay traces his subject's unappealing affections to the Acheson family's Ulster Protestant roots, a culture in which Irish Catholics and subject peoples everywhere were viewed with lofty derision, and the Empire as guardian of the privileges of the master race. Acheson retained lifelong affectionate memories of celebrating the British monarch's birthday in Middleton, Connecticut, where his father presided as Episcopal minister, with a solemn toast to "the Queen." Imbued early with Anglocentric prejudices, Acheson retained much of this worldview as he advanced toward positions where he could give it practical effect. "No sensible person can believe that African peoples can find their way toward a stabilized and civilized life without the help of the Europeans who know them best," he wrote in 1961.

It is certainly bracing to come across such citations and appreciate how deeply this man, who did so much to shape the second half of the 20th century, was rooted in the Victorian era. McNay also pays due attention to Acheson's performance as a courtier to Harry Truman, himself a subject of inflated hagiography these days. Thus, on leaving town for vacation in late 1949, the president found his secretary of state obediently waiting at the airport to see him off, the only cabinet member to do so. "As I looked around that morning ... I saw no officials present," Acheson wrote his master in a subsequent note, pointedly reminding Truman that no one else had bothered to show up, "only a man to see off on vacation another man for whom he has the deepest respect and affection."

However, when McNay delves into the archives to demonstrate his thesis that Acheson's anglophilia went beyond merely aping the manners of a British gentleman, it seems to me that he goes a little off the rails. The Irish, for example, refused to sign up for NATO unless and until something was done about "partition," the British occupation of six counties in Ulster long after the rest of Ireland had gained independence. The Dublin government hoped to use obduracy over joining the new alliance as a means of generating American pressure on London. McNay, quite rightly, has every sympathy with the Irish position, and excoriates Acheson for dismissing it out of hand. It would have indeed been a fine thing if the Truman administration had anticipated Bill Clinton by 45 years and actually leaned on the British to do something about their little apartheid colony in Ulster, but such interference by Washington in the internal affairs of its closest Cold War ally was, at that time and for decades after, simply inconceivable. Even in the Clinton era, the Irish only just succeeded in getting the ear of the White House.

McNay detects similar examples of suspicious deference to Britain, to the detriment of American interests, in policy toward India, Iran, and Egypt. I find the Indian case rather confused, while with Iran and Egypt it is not clear that Acheson was really as much a pawn of Whitehall as the author suggests. In the case of Iran, for example, it was Acheson who turned down a British proposal to mount a coup against the nationalist Mossadegh and the Dulles brothers who gave the go-ahead. The fact is that in those days, if you were going to have a Cold War, it was of supreme importance to have the British safely in the U.S. corner. Britain was, after all, the "unsinkable aircraft carrier," the one secure base in those pre-ICBM days from which U.S. nuclear bombers could threaten the U.S.S.R.

I utter such criticism with reluctance, for McNay is in some measure echoing a sturdy refrain of traditional isolationism—the perfidious British sapping and ensnaring the gullible Americans to their own ends. There were many in Washington in the late 1940s who believed, for example, that the influential Sen. Arthur Vandenberg was lured into switching from isolationism to championing intervention around the globe by a Mata Hari planted in his bed by British intelligence. Now, could it be that the same "active measures" were employed against stuffy old Acheson? Ah, no, the thought is too delicious.

ANDREW COCKBURN *is the author most recently of* Out of The Ashes: The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein.

West Side Story

By Peter Slevin

FRANKIE KOEHLER IS THE hoodlum you watched on Saturday afternoons when you had a black-and-white TV. He was the lanky white guy in a wool suit who was always staging a heist or plugging a tough-talking nobody before speeding away in a dark sedan. He did it because he never got no respect, see? And no copper was ever going to get him, see?

Except the coppers usually got him, unless some dirty-dealing thug got him first.

Check out the real Koehler. He

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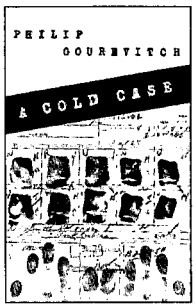
spent nearly half the 1940s behind bars for a teenage murder, then nearly the entire 1950s for armed robbery. Freed in 1962, he stole freight, ran rackets, and lived the good life. He said "woid" for word and "noive" for nerve and, one angry night in 1970, opened fire on two of his buddies. He left them dead in a Manhattan apartment ... and got away.



A COLD CASE
by Philip Gourevitch
Farrar Straus & Giroux,
$22.00

Enter Andy Rosenzweig, 27 years later. Meticulous, thoughtful, and wistfully close to retirement, the chief of investigations in the district attorney's office was headed uptown on First Avenue one day when something reminded him of the old killing. Jeez, no one had ever caught Frankie? He returned to his office and made a call. With that, the real-life chase is on and Philip Gourevitch has himself a fine cops-and-robbers story.

A Cold Case explores the intersecting lives of a cop and a crook seasoned in another era. Rosenzweig, who dodged iniquity in the New York Police Department in the 1960s, calls Koehler "a period piece, the ultimate West Side bad guy." The investigator figures retirement will feel better if he tracks a killer whom detectives long ago gave up for dead, either out of laziness or pressure to boost closure rates.

Portrayed as a moral man, frustrated by the institution but committed to the cause, Rosenzweig proves modern in his notions of foot patrols and the drawbacks of policing a community from behind a squad car's rolled-up windows. He shows his competitive edge when he repeatedly takes his wife to a diner near the house of Koehler's brother—because, he says, you never know who you'll see through the window while you're eating.

One of Gourevitch's great discoveries as he sketches the pursuer and the pursued is Rosenzweig's love since adolescence of *High Noon*. In the film, Gary Cooper is a nearly retired sheriff who sets out to save an unforgiving town from an outlaw gang. Meanwhile, as Koehler grew up reckless and poor in Hell's Kitchen, his hero was Jimmy Cagney, the prototypical movie gangster whose personality shadows Koehler deep into his own life of crime and years on the run.

It was serendipity that cost Koehler his freedom at age 68. Without Rosenzweig's itchy curiosity about the killings of Richie Glennon and Pete McGinn, Koehler almost certainly would have died undiscovered. Rosenzweig's quest rippled outward. The chase and capture of Frankie Koehler unexpectedly rocked the lives of intimates who had long since made their peace, however uneasily, with the events of 1970.

Then comes the issue of responsibility. In this period after the court-ordered killing of Timothy McVeigh, amid debate about the means and purposes of punishment, Gourevitch writes of a jailhouse conversation with Koehler about being held accountable. The prospect of Koehler dying behind bars did not seem unfair to Gourevitch, and he asked Koehler whether he saw justice in the long-delayed reckoning.

"Justice? Justice for injustice?" Koehler asked. "Is there a justice for taking a life? What would be just?" Behind bars, Koehler flails about, writing a letter to Gourevitch about a hapless suicide attempt and concluding, "What my fate should be, I must say, I don't know." Gourevitch does not seem to know either, and chooses not to explore much further.

This is not an ambitious book. Gourevitch, a writer for *The New Yorker*, teases an engaging yarn from a simple set of details and a choice group of characters who never stray far from stereotype. The grizzled, two-bit tough; the dogged, old-school detective and his energetic young protégés; the long-suffering wife and the speak-no-evil girlfriend; the theatrical mob lawyer. The movie should be swell.

As the narrative dips into Rosenzweig's late-career musings and Koehler's post-arrest rationalizations, the narrator himself walks softly, doing little to disturb the evidence or the evidence-givers. Rosenzweig talks, Koehler talks, defense lawyer Murray Richman talks. It is a smooth, sparingly written story, but if Gourevitch had only dug deeper, everyone—including the accomplished author—might have had more to say.

PETER SLEVIN *is a reporter on the national staff of* The Washington Post.

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High Court Homophobia

By Stephanie Mencimer

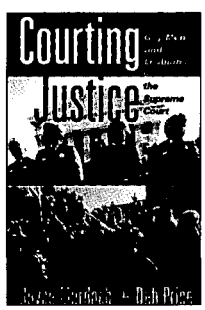
IN 1953, WHEN A GROUP OF brave souls in a seedy garment district of Los Angeles launched the nation's first gay magazine, gays and lesbians were thought to be as dangerous and sneaky as communists, lurking everywhere and threatening the nation's moral foundation. Not surprisingly, a year after it started, the Postmaster General dubbed *ONE* magazine obscene and banned its distribution.

Tame by modern standards, *ONE* hardly matched the girlie magazines of the time and only delicately talked about sex. (In one short story, a lesbian couple touched each other four times before living happily ever after—which was apparently the story's real crime in the eyes of the government.) But that didn't stop the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals from branding the October 1954 issue of *ONE* "morally depraving and debasing."

When *ONE* decided to fight the L.A. postmaster over its decision, even the ACLU wouldn't represent it, having defended the constitutionality of laws that made homosexual behavior criminal. But *ONE*'s editors did manage to find a lawyer, and much to their surprise, in 1958, the U.S. Supreme Court took up their case, its first ever dealing with homosexuality. Even more shocking, without even hearing arguments in the case, the court ruled in *ONE*'s favor, giving life to the country's gay rights movement more than a decade before the Stonewall Riots.

Yet *ONE Inc. v. Olesen* barely made *The New York Times*, and today, even many gay rights activists likely haven't heard of the landmark Supreme Court decision. That's probably because it was followed by four decades of hostile rulings from the nation's top court relegating gays and lesbians to second-class citizenship. In a remarkable piece of reporting, writers Deb Price and Joyce Murdoch resurrect *ONE*'s story, along with many others, in fresh detail in their new book, *Courting Justice: Gay Men and Lesbians v. the Supreme Court.*

Murdoch, managing editor of the *National Journal*, and Deb Price, the first nationally syndicated columnist on gay and lesbian issues, have scoured the National Archives, interviewed former court clerks, and tracked down many of the original plaintiffs and defendants to hear their tales. The stories they tell are as much about cases the justices actually heard as the ones they turned down. Read together, the decisions show a pattern of absurdly contradictory rulings that single out gays and lesbians for exceptions to civil liberties accorded to other minority groups.



COURTING JUSTICE:
Gay Men and Lesbians v. the Supreme Court
by Joyce Murdoch and Deb Price
Basic Books, $32.50

Some of the most egregious examples of the court's disregard for the constitutional rights of gay citizens come in the book's study of sodomy laws, which have been used to justify all sorts of persecution of homosexuals. Many of those cases involve men who were arrested for propositioning undercover cops. Usually, the cops were trolling gay bars or known cruising spots, where the victims had a reasonable supposition that the objects of their desire were of a similar persuasion.

As recently as 1996, the court turned down the case of a gay Oklahoma man who had been prosecuted after an undercover cop tricked him into saying that he enjoyed oral sex. The court has never ruled that such encounters are protected free speech the way they likely would for straight men who proposition women. (After all, if men were prosecuted for hitting on women, half the country—including Justice Clarence Thomas—would be in jail.)

The court's most famous sodomy case began in 1982, with a 28-year-old Atlanta bartender, Michael Hardwick. Hardwick was at home when a police officer entered his house without Hardwick's knowledge and found Hardwick and a guest engaged in mutual fellatio. Hardwick was arrested and charged with violating Georgia's sodomy law, which made even consensual oral and anal sex a felony that carried up to a 20-year prison sentence.

This time, the ACLU took the case. In 1985, the 11th Circuit ruled in Hardwick's favor, saying that the sodomy law infringed upon fundamental constitutional rights by criminalizing private acts among consenting adults. Georgia Attorney General Michael Bowers asked the Supreme Court to intervene, arguing that ancient scholars "considered even consensual sodomy to be as heinous as the crime of rape." (Later, in 1997, while running for governor, Bowers was forced to admit that he had been cheating on his wife for 15 years. His mistress told the world, "As far as sodomy is concerned, Mike Bowers is a hypocrite.")

At the Supreme Court, Hardwick was apparently the source of much anguish for Justice Lewis Powell, who claimed he'd never met a homosexual, despite having a knack for unknowingly hiring gay clerks, including one he consulted about the sodomy case. Powell initially voted in conference in favor of Hardwick, but at the last minute, with prompting from a conservative Mormon clerk, changed his mind, giving the court a 5-4 majority against Hardwick. After he retired, Powell acknowledged that his vote in *Hardwick* had been a mistake.

Price and Murdoch actually tracked down Powell's gay clerk and found that he has been kicking himself ever since for not telling Powell he was gay before the *Hardwick* vote—a lesson about the potential power of coming out in changing attitudes. The *Hardwick* ruling, heralded by the Reagan administration, has since been used as a weapon by homophobic lower-court judges who read *Hardwick* as proof that gays do not have sexual privacy rights, and that singling them out for second-class treatment is constitutional.

Price and Murdoch devote a large chunk of their book to some of the

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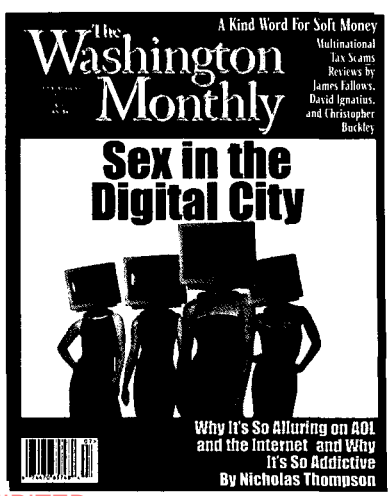

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untold numbers of cases where people have been fired or denied jobs simply because of their sexuality, noting that the court has almost never come to their aid. The one exception is the mind-boggling story of Army Staff Sgt. Perry Watkins, who served 16 years in the military as an openly gay man. Watkin's sexual orientation would have been hard for the military to ignore. He was a drag queen, and performed all over Europe in Army clubs as "Simone," even getting written up in *Stars and Stripes*.

The Army finally decided that it looked bad to have Watkins in the ranks when so many other gay and lesbian servicemembers were getting kicked out, so they tried to discharge him, four years short of retirement. Watkins sued, and the 9th Circuit eventually ruled in his favor. Despite arguments from then-Solicitor General Ken Starr, the Supreme Court let Watkins' victory stand, and he remains the only openly gay member of the military ever to claim such a high-court victory.

Courting Justice stretches a bit when it tries to read too much into some of the cases the court turned down, and also overreaches occasionally when the authors try to analyze each justice's personal view of gays as the basis for their decisions. Still, *Courting Justice* does offer up a compelling sociological study on changing attitudes. For instance, Justice Harry Blackmun had supported upholding Virginia's sodomy law in 1976, but a decade later, he not only voted to overturn Georgia's sodomy law in *Hardwick*, but wrote a magnificent dissent that would form the building block for future gay rights cases.

Chief Justice William Rehnquist, though, has never believed that gays and lesbians have equal rights, even to freedom of assembly or freedom of speech. In a 1978 dissent involving a Missouri gay student group suing for the right to campus standing, Rehnquist reasoned that gays were like people with a contagious disease, and that the government had every right to discriminate against them to protect the public. He assured that experts had established the danger of allowing gays to meet together as part of an officially recognized group, especially in a university setting, where they could infect other tender youths. Rehnquist's rhetoric has cooled some since then, but not his attitudes.

Fellow conservative Sandra Day O'Connor is harder to read, and her record on gay rights is especially interesting, given that she is likely to be Rehnquist's replacement as chief justice. O'Connor voted with the anti-gay majority in *Hardwick*, but a decade later, in *Romer v. Evans*, she surprised everyone and voted with the majority to overturn Colorado's infamous Amendment 2. The amendment, defended at the time by now-Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton, would have deprived gay and lesbian citizens of basic civil rights without giving them any legal recourse to challenge discrimination. O'Connor was the only justice who had voted in favor of Hardwick and then against Amendment 2 in a decision that, for the first time, declared that gay citizens might have the right to equal protection.

But as Murdoch and Price show so well, just when the brethren offer gays and lesbians the hope of progress, they dash it with another contradictory ruling. Four years after *Romer*, the court ruled, with O'Connor in the majority, that the Boy Scouts of America had the right to exclude troop leaders based solely upon their sexuality. As Justice John Paul Stevens said in dissent, "Unfavorable opinions about homosexuals 'have ancient roots,'" and Murdoch and Price show how much the work for their acceptance, at least by the nation's highest court, is only beginning.

STEPHANIE MENCIMER *is an editor of* The Washington Monthly.

Clinton's Mental Golf

By Matthew Cooper

BENJAMIN BARBER'S VERY NICE book offers insight into Bill Clinton, the wonk. A Rutgers professor known for smart, interesting policy books like *McWorld v. Jihad*, a study of globalism, Barber was something of a hanger-on in the Clinton White House. The president's speechwriting team would occasionally tap him for ideas; Clinton had Barber up to Camp David to talk out themes for his State of the Union address, and Barber was briefly under consideration to head the National Endowment for the Humanities.

I didn't keep track, and Barber doesn't spell it out specifically, but it sounds as if he met with Clinton about a dozen times during his eight years in office, almost always in a group setting, only having private words on a couple of occasions. That may not sound like the best fodder for a memoir. But often the best accounts are written by minor characters, less concerned with how history will judge them, than by the principals who write with a hesitant pen.

Barber's a small enough fry that he gleefully notes how he gobbled up souvenirs at the Camp David gift shop. Big shots actually do this too, he notes, since so few outsiders get to visit Camp David. But it's impossible to imagine, say, David Gergen chronicling how he snagged a Camp David Frisbee or going on at length about the White House's chicken with pumpkin gnocchi. Barber's utter lack of pretension leads to some funny moments, like his hysterical account of sitting next to Clinton at a dinner where the two shared a dish of nuts: "Every time I casually reached out with my hand to take a nut, the president's large left hand shot out like a cobra's head dropping over the mouth of the cup blocking my access."

To Barber's credit, he's self-aware enough to know that he sounds like an academic Sammy Glick sometimes—too ambitious for his own good. After he's turned down for the NEH head—in favor of Bill Ferris, the Mississippi folklorist who, unlike Barber, had the full backing of Trent Lott—Barber painfully begs the First Lady's Chief of Staff Melanne Verveer, one of his champions, to reconsider. As the two meet at the White House, Barber keeps begging. She finally has to

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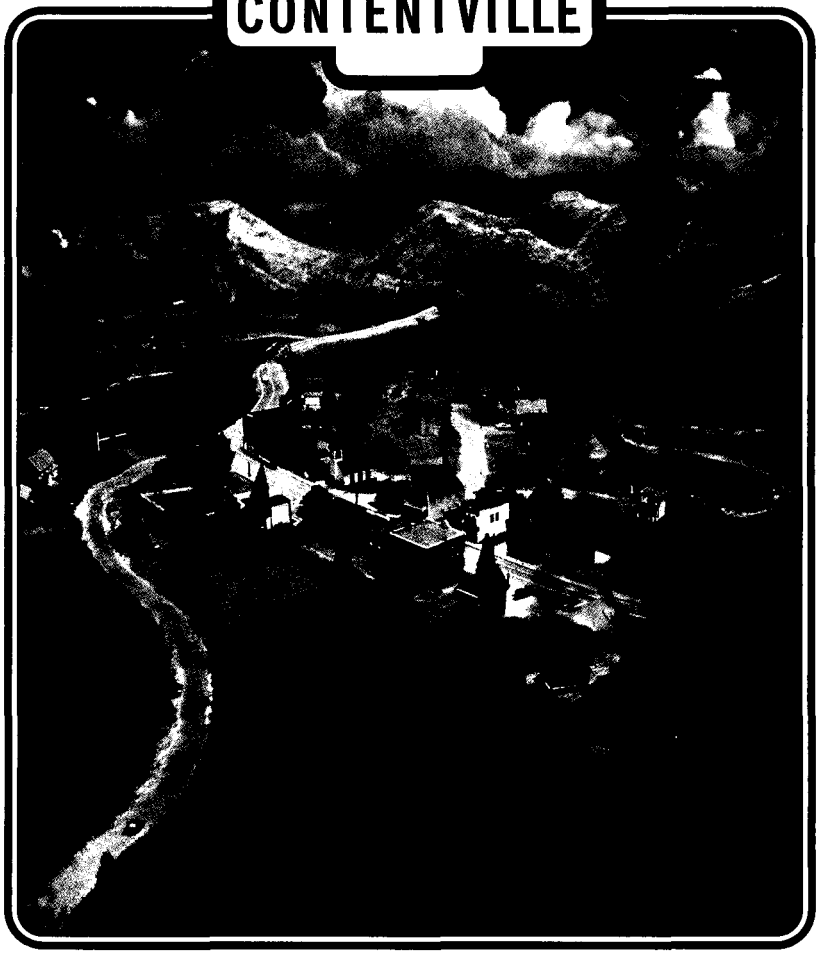

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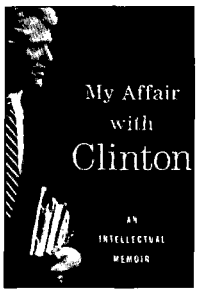
declare: "It's over." Defeated, he winds up, by coincidence, sitting next to Ralph Nader on the plane as he leaves Washington. Unable to contain himself, Barber unloads his frustrations on Nader. Even though it's still years away until his 2000 presidential bid, Nader is already foaming with anti-Clinton hatred, telling Barber that he has to go public to denounce the atrocity of his not getting the NEH job.



MY AFFAIR WITH CLINTON:
An Intellectual Memoir
by Benjamin R. Barber
W.W. Norton, $24.95

When Barber gets home, *The New York Times* is calling for the inside account of what happened. (Nader had already leaked to the Gray Lady.) Sensing that maybe he should stop his whining, Barber declines to lambaste the president in print. It's as nice a little tale as you'll find about the hope and heartbreak surrounding the confirmation process.

The truth, as Barber sees it, is that intellectuals ultimately have little effect on governance, even with a brainiac president like Clinton. For all the advice Clinton got at various dinners and confabs with academics, ultimately he took only snippets of what they said and incorporated it into his agenda. The long dinners with academics like Robert Putnam of *Bowling Alone* fame or Theda Skocpol, the political theorist, are really just "mental golf" for the president. A useful distraction, but hardly a tutorial. Barber is wise enough to know that this is as it should be. Academics shouldn't run the White House, he acknowledges; the president should.

Still, he can't help but feel hurt when he would submit entire speeches to the Clinton speech writing team and they'd use barely a sentence or two. (He reprints them here as if to get out his frustration. But, believe me, I think Clinton did the right thing by only taking bits.) This leaves him feeling a somewhat like a rejected lover, giving the word "affair" in the title a double meaning. Seduced by Clinton, but unsatis-fied, he's sort of like Monica with a doctorate. Some of this, though, sounds like whining.

Take the issue of national service. Barber's a big advocate of national service and indeed Clinton announced his AmeriCorps plan in a speech at Barber's Rutgers. (There's a very funny account of how Barber single-handedly convinced the White House to do the speech at the New Jersey state university by saying he could guarantee a crowd of 10,000. Of course, he had no such ability. But once the White House announced the speech, the crowd took care of itself.)

Barber is upset that Clinton never did enough to shore up the philosophical underpinnings of national service. He felt the president, like Colin Powell with his America's Promise, put too much emphasis on the good works of public service rather than the transformative effects on the service workers themselves. But does that really matter? Regardless of whether Clinton used Barber's preferred philosophical rhetoric, the fact is that national service is alive and thriving even after the Bush takeover.

A few other quibbles: Barber has got a habit of quoting people at length in the book. Unless he was tape-recording conversations, it's hard to imagine how he's doing more than paraphrasing. So why be so sloppy with what were supposed to have been verbatim quotes? Indeed, given other annoying errors in the book—Tom Brokaw's bestseller was *The Greatest Generation* not *The Heroic Generation*—you start to wonder about the accuracy of these recollections. (I should add here that my wife once worked for Bill Clinton and that a number of friends of mine are mentioned in the book.)

But these are quibbles. This is a smart book about Clinton and the presidency in general. It gets at that perennial question of who makes a good president. Is it intellectuals like Wilson or Clinton or Jefferson or less academic types like, say, Truman or Reagan? Ultimately, I found myself liking Clinton more after the book not because he was so bookish—often he had less toleration for the talkathons than you'd imagine—but because he had the good sense to know when to blow off the academics and follow his political gut.

Barber seems torn about this. On one hand, he's glad that intellectuals don't rule the roost, but he's also a little remorseful that he didn't have more clout and that Clinton wasn't more philosophical. Fortunately for the rest of us, we don't have to have that kind of ambivalence. There are upsides to having a bookish president, but it hardly seems a prerequisite of effective leadership.

MATTHEW COOPER, *a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly, *is deputy Washington bureau chief for* Time *magazine.*

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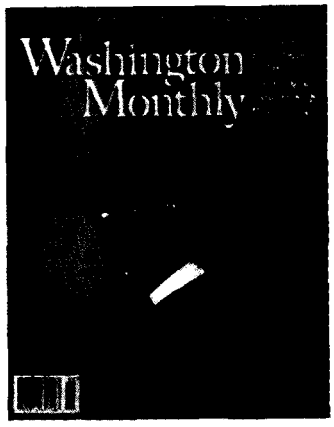

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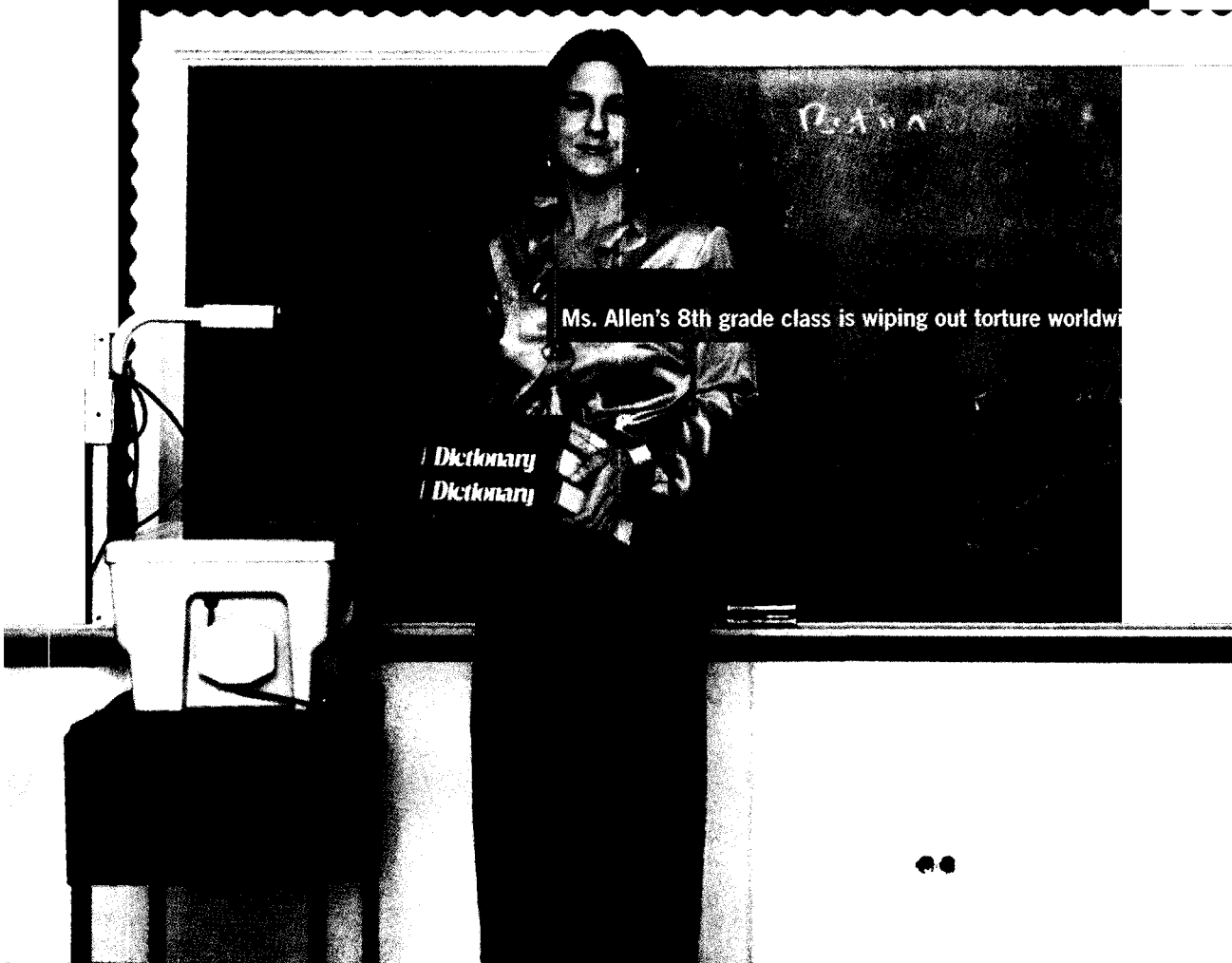

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